

FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH
SCHOOL LIBRARY

**HISTORY of
FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH
of Des Moines, Iowa**

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FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH
DES MOINES, IOWA

At Bell avenue and Casady drive

Organized August 5, 1877

A Brief History of It by Oval Quist

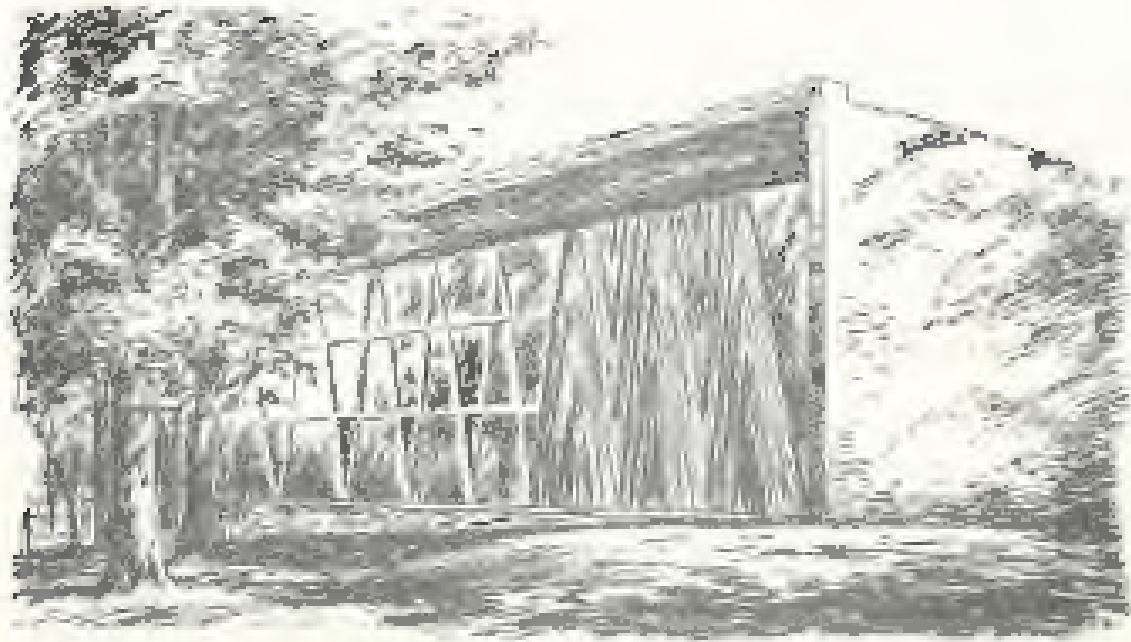
Dedicated to Pioneer Religious Liberals of Iowa

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★ IN GRATEFUL MEMORY ★
★ OF ★
★ THE PIONEER RELIGIOUS LIBERALS ★
★ OF IOWA ★
★ THEY DARED TO FOLLOW ★
★ WHERE TRUTH LED THE WAY ★
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★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
★
★ IN LOVING REMEMBRANCE OF ★
★ SYLVAN STANLEY HUNTING ★
★ MINISTER OF THIS SOCIETY FROM 1880 TO 1886 ★
★ AND HIS WIFE ★
★ JULIA MARIA HUNTING ★
★ A WISE COUNSELOR A CHEERFUL HELPMATE ★
★
★ THIS TABLET ERECTED BY THEIR SON ★
★ NATHANIEL S. HUNTING ★
★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Two plaques in the entrance of the meeting house
of the First Unitarian Church, Des Moines, Iowa

"Without knowledge of the past the way into the thickets
of the future is desperate and un-clear."---
---From "Unexpected Univeres"
By Dr. Loren Kiesel



"A church with windows challenging its members to look out upon the larger community in which they are involved, and to fix their gaze upon the horizon, dim in the distance, that forever moves as they move--thus reminding all who sit in its pews, or stand in its pulpit, that 'no static system of ethics can do justice to the still unfathomed possibilities of human development';--that what is, or was, is not good enough for those who dream of what might be."---

—John B. Isom, May 3, 1913.

PREFACE

History may never repeat itself (although there can certainly be recurring motifs and patterns from which much can be learned).

Tradition can be a dead weight, but a knowledge of roots is at least equal to an understanding of one's identity, as a constant (and possibly mindless) addiction to endless growth. And institutions find it harder than individuals to maintain an institutional memory, or to go beyond the mere keeping and storing of records, to the synthesis and analysis of them for meaning. In recent years this point of view has been pretty much in limbo, but hopefully there is a new mood arising.

The Des Moines church is unique and not in the sense that any individual or institution is different from all others. For one thing, the numbers of women clergy in the movement were certainly greater, I believe, both proportionally and in actual numbers, in the Midwest than anywhere else. And in the Midwest, women ministers had the most sustained, and one might say institutionalized, establishment in the Des Moines church--of the churches that maintained continuity. Why it arose when it did, and why it failed when it did would make a solid monograph in itself. It had both virtues and liabilities for the church (as do all men also) and it would be fascinating, as well as instructive, to give it the treatment it deserves.

But there are larger dimensions of uniqueness. Des Moines represents a better focal point than Omaha or Kansas City or Davenport (despite the three being older) or Minneapolis (four years younger) from which to treat the movement in the Midwest in a period behind the frontier by some time, but still strikingly different from the East, and relate it both to the Eastern origins and to the social, cultural, and economic problems of the region.---

---Charles W. Phillips,
Des Moines Unitarian Minister 1949-1956

DES MOINES UNITARIAN CHURCH ORGANIZED

".... up to 1877 a Unitarian sermon had never been preached in Des Moines.

"During the first week of June that year the Rev. J. R. Effinger of Keokuk came to this city to confer with the liberal element for the purpose of effecting regular services. The encouragement he met was not very promising but acting upon the theory that those who have once revolted against the cruel and irrational of the so-called evangelical churches could never return to the delusion from which they had emancipated themselves he determined to attempt the establishment of a Unitarian society."

—From the report by Benjamin F. Sue, president of the First Unitarian Church of Des Moines on January 17, 1894, to members of the society. Mr. Sue was a charter member, lieutenant governor of Iowa 1866-1868, and the author of a comprehensive history of the State of Iowa.

Des Moines was a city of some 16,000 residents in 1877, the population of Polk County, including Des Moines, being a little more than 33,000 as recorded in the state census of 1875.

There had been a Universalist society earlier in Des Moines with a meeting house at Sixth and Cherry streets. The congregation had been served by three ministers, T. C. Eaton, J. B. Sanford and W. W. King. The society was disbanded somewhere around 1874.

Unitarian societies had been organized at Burlington in 1840, Keokuk in 1853, Davenport in 1868 and at Cedar Rapids in 1869. The ones at Cedar Rapids, which did not affiliate with the American Unitarian Association until years later, and at Davenport were still active in 1977. The one at Burlington disbanded after a few years of activity. It was replaced by a healthy Fellowship in 1950.

A State Organization

Undocumented material in the archives of the Des Moines Unitarian society reveal that six men met at Gorham's Hotel in Burlington on June 1, 1877, and organized the Iowa Unitarian Association. They were listed as the Rev. Oscar Clute and Dr. Freeman Knowles of Keokuk, the Rev. S. S. Hunting of Davenport, the Rev. W. R. Cole of Mount Pleasant, the Rev. J. R. Effinger of Keokuk and the Rev. T. B. Forbus, secretary of the Western Unitarian Conference.

Mr. Hunting later became the first regular minister of the Des Moines society, 1880-1886, and Mr. Clute served the society in 1898.

The reason for organizing the state association was stated in the text of the constitution, reading in part:

"Whereas, entire freedom is necessary to the growth of religion in the souls of men; and, whereas, creed-bound organizations are an obstacle to human progress and happiness;

"Resolved, that we hereby unite ourselves into a permanent society for the purpose of building up free churches, based on practical righteousness, in the State of Iowa."

The Iowa Unitarian Association was active for a little more than 90 years but ceased to exist in 1969 following the merger of the

Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church of America into the Unitarian Universalist Association of the United States and Canada.

Three days after the Burlington meeting, Mr. Effinger, who had been named state organizer, was in Des Moines where he spoke to 30 persons in a hall in the Union Block, at the corner of Fifth and Locust streets. Unitarians, Universalists, Hicksite Quakers and other religious liberals were in that group.

Despite the apparent apathy which Mr. Effinger encountered, efforts to organize a society in Des Moines were continued. And The Iowa State Register of Sunday, August 5, carried this announcement:

"UNITARIAN SERVICES: Rev. J. R. Effinger, state organizer of the Iowa Unitarian Society, will preach in Temperance Hall, in Rollins block, Sunday, August 5, at 10 1/2 oclock, A.M., and at 8 oclock P.M. Subject: morning: 'The Letter and the Spirit', in evening: 'Redemption, False and True'. All are cordially invited."

On August 7 The Register printed:

"The Unitarian Church, under Mr. Effinger, was formally organized Sunday evening."

Charter Members

Old, and apparently original, records list nine persons as charter members. They were:

| | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Benjamin F. Gue | Mrs. F. E. S. White | Augustus Smith |
| William H. Fleming | A. A. Brown | C. A. Culver |
| George White | Mrs. A. A. Brown | Mrs. D. L. Culver |

Ten more persons signed the membership book on August 19. One of that group, Joel P. Davis, was elected first president of the society.

For two years Mr. Effinger divided his time between Des Moines and field work in the state. According to records of the Iowa Unitarian Association, Mr. Effinger travelled more than 5,200 miles in the state in his efforts to develop Unitarianism. But early in 1880 he accepted an offer to become minister of the Unitarian Society in Bloomington, Illinois.

Sylvan Stanley Hunting Named Minister

In August, 1880, Sylvan Stanley Hunting, who was minister in Davenport, visited Des Moines to confer about the interests of the Des Moines Society. He came as a member of the executive committee of the Iowa Unitarian Association, and also because he had been asked to consider the possibility of becoming the Des Moines minister.

As a result of that visit a called meeting of the Des Moines trustees adopted a resolution, offered by E. A. Ayerst, which read:

"Resolved that we offer the Iowa Unitarian Association the sum of \$400 per annum for the support of preaching twice a month by Rev. Mr. Hunting, who is hereby invited to the pastorate of the church."

All parties who were involved agreed and Mr. Hunting was installed on September 26. At that service a desire for Mr. Hunting to devote all his

time to the society was voiced in an adopted resolution which had been offered on behalf of the trustees. That resolution stated:

"Whereas it is now evident to the members of the congregation that service of our pastor every Sunday would greatly add to the interest of the church and be more likely to insure the success for which we hope,

"Therefore be it resolved that Mr. Hunting be invited to give us all his time, or as nearly that as he possibly can, and we pledge ourselves to do our utmost to add to the compensation that we have already promised, asking him to trust our best efforts in that behalf."

Less Than Expected

It was not an easy beginning. Mr. Hunting comments in his personal record:

"I began to preach for the Unitarian Church in Des Moines in September 1880. And I was to receive from the society \$400 and from the Iowa Unitarian Association \$400. The second year I was to receive from the society \$600 and from I. U. A. \$400. From September 1, 1880 to December 1, 1882, I received from the society \$882 and from the I. U. A. \$729.04. Total for services \$1,611.04.

"I received from June 1, 1882 to June 1, 1883, \$283. During that year Mrs. Hunting, and I, myself, contributed \$250. That gave a net income for preaching for the year we built the church (meeting house) the sum of \$33. Practically I gave a year of service.--S. S. Hunting." (His personal comments do not always follow in exact chronological order.)

If serving as minister, practically without pay, was a sacrifice, there were other obstacles in the path of those early Iowa non-conformists. For instance, in his notes dated January 17, 1881, Mr. Hunting writes:

"December 5 we began a course of historical lectures in the Academy of Music. We held services there six Sundays under the most discouraging circumstances. The hall was not warmed, especially in the mornings, so people nearly froze and would not come out. The extreme cold weather made it necessary to have the remainder of the lectures in the small hall on Locust street. I have received from this church \$40 a month, the rate of \$400 per year of ten months."

Talk About a Meeting House

But somehow the tenuous and faltering group of religious liberals held on and Mr. Hunting continued to serve them, even at the extreme personal cost to Mrs. Hunting and himself. Determination persisted and although growth of membership was slow and financial support lagged, desires for a meeting place of their own spurred the congregation to action. The members had incorporated as a non-profit organization on October 5, 1880.

Obviously, the problem of a building of their own concerned the membership, not only where to erect it, but more important how to obtain a site. The problem was solved in 1881 when, according to Mr. Hunting's notes:

"Sunday, March 6, the congregation was detained for a business meeting to state the plan which had been agreed upon to purchase a lot. (There is no record available of what that plan might have been.) In the midst of our explaining and talk, Mrs. Mary Wright, wife of Senator

Wright, said she would give us a lot. (George G. Wright was an Iowa State Supreme Court Justice from 1855 to 1870 and a United States senator from Iowa from 1871 to 1877.) The offer was a glad surprise. We all rejoiced and by a rising vote we thanked Mrs. Mary Wright. She said since her father gave her the property and gave her the spirit she ought to give it to the church."

For reasons, not known now, the property offered by Mrs. Wright did not seem suitable and it was traded for a lot at the corner of Fifteenth and Linden streets.

A wooden building was erected. It was the first meeting house of Des Moines Unitarians. Cost was in the neighborhood of \$9,000, financed in part by loans from the American Unitarian Association and from Des Moines banks.

Dedication

The building was dedicated in a special service December 3, 1882, with the sermon given by Oscar Clute, minister of the Iowa City society. From old records, which have miraculously survived to this day, here is the text of the dedication statement of the service:

"In the name of God, above all, and through all, we dedicate this house;

"In the name of Jesus Christ, we dedicate this house;

"In the name of religion, as a universal sentiment of Mankind, we dedicate this house;

"We dedicate it to Fraternity, Charity and Loyalty;

"We dedicate it to Honesty, Justice and Fidelity.

"We dedicate it to Intellectual Freedom, Kindly and Helpful Fellowship and the reverent study of the Truth;

"We dedicate it to Music and the Spiritual Life;

"We dedicate it to the Love of God and the Love of Man;

"We dedicate it to the purity of Home and the education of Youth;

"We dedicate it to the hope of Immortality and the Redemption of Mankind;

"Here may Faith, Hope and Charity abide;

"Here may the Eternal Goodness be revealed in true and faithful Souls;

"Yea, the work of our hands we establish Thou it."

Mr. Hunting continued as Des Moines minister until 1886 when failing health began to slow down his activities, although he did continue to do some work with a few small Unitarian groups in Iowa and Minnesota. The Huntings continued to make their home in Des Moines where Mr. Hunting died on June 2, 1894. Following memorial services, his body was buried in Woodland cemetery in Des Moines.

Mr. Hunting was born March 22, 1826, in New London, New Hampshire, the ninth child of Israel and Lucinda Everett Hunting. He was a descendent of John Hunting who came to the New World from Suffolk County, England, in 1633.

A biography of him says that in 1842, at the age of 16 years, he was competent to teach a common district school. He was admitted to the Harvard Divinity School in 1849 and after graduation in 1852 he became minister of the church society in Brookfield, Massachusetts.

Mr. Hunting married Carrie E. Stowell on October 18, 1855, and a son, Stanley, was born in September, 1856. Mrs. Hunting's health was poor and she died in February, 1857.

In October, 1858, Mr. Hunting became minister of the Manchester, New Hampshire, church society and in November of that year he married Julia M. Stevens of North Andover, Massachusetts. A son, Charles, was born April 3, 1861, and another son, Nathaniel, on February 18, 1863.

Mr. Hunting moved to Detroit, Michigan, in November 1861. He resigned his ministry there in 1863 to enter the Army as chaplain of the 27th Regiment, Michigan Infantry Volunteers. His chaplaincy was terminated August 4, 1865, and two and a half months later he accepted the ministry of the Second Congregational (Unitarian) Church of Quincy, Illinois. In 1871 he was named western secretary of the American Unitarian Association and served in that capacity until June, 1874. But a year earlier he had been named minister of the Davenport, Iowa, Church, where he served before coming to Des Moines. Julia Marie Stevens Hunting, the widow, had been born August 6, 1823. She survived her husband by nine years, dying in May of 1903. Following memorial services her body was buried beside that of Mr. Hunting in Woodland Cemetery.

Contribution to Mankind

Mr. Hunting's contribution to Mankind was emphasized in a Des Moines Register editorial following his death:

"Mr. Hunting was not only a preacher; he was a reformer and a man of science in the highest sense; and a philanthropist of eminent services. Before the (Civil) War he was a friend of Wendell Phillips, William Lloyd Garrison and Lucy Stone and was associated with them in the Abolition movement. His private correspondence bears the names of T. W. Higginson, Bronson Alcott, Dr. Noyes, and many other distinguished Americans....

"In everything he did he was enthusiastic. There was no half-heartedness in him. He touched full palms, not finger tips. He was willing to live and act for what he believed, and to die if need be. Such a life is a great contribution to the World at any time, and the taking away such a life, even though it comes after years of service in every good cause, is an occasion of sorrow."

WOMEN MINISTERS

Ida C. Hultin

Unitarians were early to recognize the ability of women and the second minister of the Des Moines society was Ida C. Hultin who came from Algona, Iowa, in October, 1886.

Society records indicate she was ill a great deal of the time and resigned for that reason in May 1891.

In the jumble of records and bits of information that have accumulated over the years there is a paragraph, with no indication as to who wrote it. It reads:

"My first recollection of the Unitarian Church of Des Moines was the thrill of listening to a sermon in 1890 by the Rev. Ida C. Hultin in the old building on Fifteenth street. Probably the first thrill came from the realization that anyone dared to express such unorthodox views concerning the Bible and religion openly from a pulpit with such a fund of information behind every statement and with such a truly religious spirit withal that it was a wonder the church was not crowded to the limits of its capacity."

Reserved Seats

Leon A. Harvey, a graduate of Harvard Divinity School, came from the Unitarian Church in Cincinnati, Ohio, to become minister in 1891. He was active in philanthropic movements and for a time served as president of the City Board of Charities.

Pews, or seats if you prefer, have not always been free and unreserved. During Mr. Harvey's ministry the trustees adopted a resolution on March 12, 1894, which stated:

"Resolved that the minister be requested to read from the pulpit the following, or something like it, viz., 'While the seats in the church are free nevertheless in cases persons attending this church desire to have seats reserved for them if those so desiring will notify the trustees to that effect, such reservations to continue at all times until the second hymn and longer unless the house is crowded.'"

If that resolution was ever repealed, no such action has ever been found in board minutes.

Religion Judged by Its Works

It was while Mr. Harvey was minister that B. F. Gue, president of the society and of the trustees, mentioned earlier as a charter member of the society, told members at the annual meeting on January 16, 1895, eighteen years after the founding:

"The outlook for the growth of our society is reasonably bright. United in upholding our grand faith, harmonious in our church and social relationships, steadfast in our loyalty to the principles of untrammelled freedom of religious belief and action, our little church is a tower of strength.

"It is one of the landmarks on the vast desert of repression, where abject fear and moral cowardice bolster up decaying creeds which cannot long survive the growing spirit of sincere and fearless investigation.

It stands for complete emancipation of the individual from the slavery of supernatural dogmas, invented and formulated by bigotry in past ages

"It stands for truth, and its fearless utterances

"It stands for a religion that must be judged by its works, now and here, by its influence upon the lives and characters of its adherents, rather than by slavish belief in man-made schemes of salvation and damnation in an unexplored future.

"Standing, thus alone in this community, it is our high privilege and duty to make some sacrifice of time, money and work to strengthen this outpost of rational religion "

Trying to make comparisons between budgets of more than eighty years ago and now is a dubious undertaking when one considers changes in the values of the dollar, but you might be interested in the budget that was adopted at that 1895 annual meeting

| | |
|--------------------|---------|
| Music | \$ 85 |
| Coal | 25 |
| Light | 25 |
| Insurance | 10 |
| Paving and curbing | 100 |
| Water | 5 |
| Other sundries | 87 |
| Minister's salary | 1,500 |
| Total | \$1,845 |

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Dr. Clute's Valuable Papers Destroyed

There was a year of uncertainty after Mr. Harvey resigned in 1897. Then in September, 1898, Sally S. Cotton, in her thesis, prepared in 1968 for a class in history at Drake University, wrote

"E. F. Gue was instructed to secure the services of Dr. Oscar Clute at a salary of \$450 for six months. Dr. Clute had just resigned his position as president of the State Agricultural College in Florida.

"An article in The (Des Moines) Leader published in March of 1898 explains the reasons for Dr. Clute leaving Florida and coming to Des Moines.

"... considered one of the most fearless ministers of that section (Florida). his preaching antagonized an element of the community and one night they set fire to his residence and not only destroyed it and the furniture but a valuable botanical collection, including papers of great value to him and other property pertaining to his profession, which he had collected during the years he was devoted to agricultural study as president of the institutions in Wisconsin and Florida."

By December of 1898 the Unitarian Church could provide only \$31 per month of Dr. Clute's salary. In the spring of the next year he resigned to become minister of a church in Pomona, California, he had founded years before. He stated he was leaving on account of his health which was affected by the cold Iowa winters."

In his journal, Mr. Hunting had written that Oscar Clute of Iowa City had delivered the sermon when the meeting house at Fifteenth and Linden streets was dedicated.

The November 1949 Proceedings of the State Historical Society of Iowa records that in 1878 the Rev. Oscar Clute of the Unitarian Church of Kenkuk came to Iowa City to begin organizational work there. Mr. Clute remained as minister in Iowa City until 1884.

It is assumed that all references in the preceding paragraphs are about the same Oscar Clute. His activities from the time when he departed from Iowa City and quit his position in Florida are not available.

Miss Safford Comes to Des Moines

The society was faced with the problem of finding a minister after Dr. Clute resigned early in 1899. The search was begun. Then it was explained in a special membership meeting on June 13 that Miss Mary Augusta Safford, then minister at Sioux City, Iowa, had stated that if she could be released from the ministry there and could bring Miss Mary H. Jenney with her, she would come to Des Moines for a very small salary, part of her time to be devoted to work in the state.

That proposal apparently did not meet with too much enthusiasm because a second plan was presented June 24: Miss Jenney would devote all her time to Des Moines and Miss Safford would deliver two sermons a month while working for Unitarianism throughout the state. Members approved this and the two women came to Des Moines. Miss Jenney was paid \$800 for the year beginning September 10 and ending in June of 1900.

Miss Safford remained as minister until 1910, having been re-elected by members at each annual meeting. However, she did take some leaves of absence during the period because of ill health. The termination of her ministry is described by Lon Ray Call, then American Unitarian Association minister-at-large, in his report made in 1944 when he was in Des Moines while search for a minister was being made. Mr. Call reported:

"The annual meeting in 1908 elected Miss Safford for her tenth year. The treasurer reported the church society in good financial condition, with all bills paid and \$16.31 in the treasury.

"In July of that year at a board meeting Miss Safford passed around a photograph of an English Unitarian minister, a young woman by the name of Gertrude von Petzold, with whom she was in correspondence regarding her supplying the Des Moines pulpit for part of the coming year, and all allowed she was a fine looking young woman. A few months later Miss

the m... was ele...
trustees July 31, 1910).

The Society Moves to High Street

W. L. White, L. J. Wells, D. B. Lyons, J. H. Windsor, and H. E.

pledges of more than \$10,000 had been obtained

Des Moines society remain alive today.)

Action

Iowa State Librarian.

The... had... and...

Dear...
I...
Sincerely,
...

Miss Safford said she had one or two matters, or surprises, to bring before the trustees. First as a memorial to her mother, Lou Se Hunt Safford, she now wished to present to the First Unitarian Church of Des Moines, Iowa, the new pipe organ recently installed in the church (it had been purchased from the William Schaecke Pipe Organ Company of Milwaukee, Wisconsin), and, second that she had not yet sufficiently recovered her health and strength to enable her to continue the canvass for money to liquidate the church debt, she had elected to close the whole matter by paying off the entire indebtedness herself and already had made arrangements for so doing, and that in less than 24 hours our church would be free of debt (about \$5,680).

Miss Safford had one stipulation. She wanted an agreement that if the Iowa City church property were sold that she would be repaid \$4,000 from the Des Moines society's share of that sale.

Miss Safford was ill much of the time during the winter of 1904-1905 so ministerial duties were cared for by Miss Eleanor Gordon, who had been minister at Iowa City and Sioux City. Miss Jenney, mentioned earlier, had given up her work in 1904 when she became the wife of Frederic C. Howe of New York.

Bronze Plaque Honors Miss Safford

There is a bronze plaque which memorializes Miss Safford in the room of the present meeting house which bears her name. The plaque reads:

IN LOVING MEMORY OF MARY AUGUSTA SAFFORD
MINISTER OF THIS SOCIETY 1899-1910
PASTOR EMERITUS 1910-1927
THIS TABLET ERECTED BY UNITY CIRCLE 1925

Miss Safford was born in 1852 in Hamilton, Illinois. She died October 25, 1947 at Orlando, Florida, where she had lived following her retirement from the ministry. She had attended what was then Iowa State College at Ames. She was unitarian minister for five years at Humboldt, Iowa, and at Sioux City, Iowa, for 14 years before she was named Des Moines minister. She was president of the Iowa Unitarian Association for seven years.

Miss Safford's last visit to Des Moines was during the year before her death. She suffered a broken hip on her return to Florida from which she never fully recovered.

Miss Safford enjoyed an independent and substantial income. It has been noted above that she not only paid for the pipe organ for the High street building and wiped out a debt of \$5,680 against the church property. In her will she provided another gift to the Des Moines society which exceeded \$1,000 and a gift of the same amount to the Iowa Unitarian Association. She also bequeathed \$10,000 to the public school system of Hamilton, Illinois, for a high school auditorium.

Following Miss Safford's death she was eulogized by an editorial in The Des Moines Tribune which concluded:

"It can be said of Miss Safford that everybody who knew her in better or her example and her affirmative leadership. She helped to shape the thinking and living of them all, and on a higher level. When the World has reached the plane she would have put it on and struggled to put it on we shall have a kinder and more livable world."

when Miss Safford was too ill to perform her duties.

Juan Martin

Mr. Martin was a well-known editorial writer for the New York Globe.

He was born at Jacksonville, Illinois, July 5, 1880. He

1908-1910

He was born at Jacksonville, Illinois, July 5, 1880. He died May 10, 1941.

Curtis W. Reese

Western Unitarian Conference.

housing law.

He was born at Jacksonville, Illinois, July 5, 1880. He died May 10, 1941.

was operated much as was the U S O during the Second World War. As many as 50 or more men were thusly entertained every Friday evening during the winter.

Earlier, at the membership meeting on April 10, 1917, Johnson Brigham submitted a resolution "deploring certain war conditions" (The United States Congress had declared war on Germany on April 6.)

Mr. Brigham's resolution, in the form of a motion, was seconded by C. D. Kilson, a trustee. It was approved by the members. Here is the text of that resolution:

"Deeply deploring the acts of barbarism which have resulted in the murder upon the high seas of hundreds of our fellow countrymen and thousands of other equally innocent men, women and children, acts committed with utter disregard to international law and the claims of a common humanity, and solemnly protesting against unnumberable other crimes against humanity committed by a desperate autocracy in its savage attempt to maintain itself against the forces of democracy and civilization,

Profoundly averse to war for conquest, for commercial supremacy, or for any other purpose than to achieve a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations,

We, as members of the First Unitarian Church of Des Moines, in annual membership assembled, heartily pledge the peace-loving and patriotic president and the peace-loving and patriotic Congress of the United States our sympathy and support in the present crisis, in the fervent hope that the end toward which we all aim, as expressed above, may speedily be attained, namely (quoting from the President's message), 'to vindicate the principles of peace and justice in the life of the world as against selfish and autocratic power, and to set up among the really free and self-governed peoples of the world such a concert of purpose and effort as will henceforth insure the observance of these principles.' " (p. 72, board minutes of the board of trustees, First Unitarian Church, Des Moines, Iowa, 1913-1941.)

Father of Humanist Movement in U S

Mr. Reese, who later was awarded a Doctor of Divinity degree, delivered a sermon in 1917 entitled, "A Democratic view of Religion." The major portion of that sermon is printed along with parts of sermons and comments by other Des Moines ministers near the end of this volume. This particular sermon by Mr. Reese was instrumental in the formative stages of the Humanist movement in the United States. When the American Humanist movement was organized in 1941 Dr. Reese became its first president.

Mr. Reese resigned June 29, 1919, because he had been offered the executive position of the Western Unitarian Conference in Chicago. He was born September 3, 1887, in Madison county, North Carolina. He was graduated by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, in 1910 and awarded the degree of Doctor of Divinity by Meadville Theological School in 1927. He and Fay Howell Walker were married February 7, 1913. They were the parents of two daughters and one son.

He quit his Baptist ties in 1913 and became a Unitarian. After leaving Des Moines he served the Western Conference until 1930. He also was dean of Lincoln Center, Chicago, from 1916 until his retirement. He died June 5, 1961. His body was placed in a crypt in the First Unitarian Church building in Chicago.

Edmund H. Reeman

Mr. Reeman was succeeded by Edmund Henry Reeman of Trenton, New Jersey, who was elected by the membership on September 8, 1919. He remained until 1924 when he resigned as of April 30.

He was born in England July 5, 1881, and planned to be a Baptist minister. So he took examinations for entrance into the Baptist Union of Great Britain and became a Baptist preacher in 1905.

Because of theological reasons he resigned from the Baptist Church and came to the United States in 1913. He was Unitarian minister in Trenton from 1916 until 1919 when he came to Des Moines.

Mr. Reeman was the author of "Do We Need a New Idea of God?" In 1917. He became a lecturer on drama after departing from Des Moines.

He married Winifred Augusta Siddons on March 17, 1910. They had two children. He died January 9, 1950, at Vineland, New Jersey.

Henry J. Adlard

Henry J. Adlard followed Mr. Reeman in 1924 as Des Moines Unitarian minister and remained until the summer of 1928.

One of Mr. Adlard's contributions to Unitarianism was the writing of the words and the music of a "Hymn of Valor." It has been used most of the time since then at the conclusion of the Sunday services in Des Moines. The hymn also is used in a number of other churches and fellowships. You will find it later in this volume.

No Union Now

It was during Mr. Adlard's ministry that a communication was received in May 1925 from a committee purporting to represent Plymouth Congregational Church of Des Moines suggesting that the Des Moines Unitarian Church unite with them. The Unitarian trustees replied with a resolution which was adopted on September 24, the text of which follows:

"Whereas, persons representing Plymouth Church have suggested to representatives of the First Unitarian Church of Des Moines that there be a union of such bodies and have stated that there is no material difference of belief, as between them, and

"Whereas, if there be no such difference of belief, such a united group would mutually affiliate with the Unitarian denomination, and

"Whereas, the official board of the First Unitarian Church believes that there should be a union wherever possible, so that the cause of religion may be most effectively furthered, and is willing to assent to such union for this purpose;

"Now, therefore be it resolved by the board of trustees of the First Unitarian Church of Des Moines, Iowa, as follows:

"1 -That we heartily favor the union of Plymouth Church with our own,
2. That we suggest the name of the united group shall be the First Unitarian Church of Des Moines or Plymouth Unitarian Church of Des Moines,

"3 -If Plymouth Church favors such a union and so advises the president of this board he is authorized to arrange a joint meeting of the boards concerned to further consider the matter." (p. 184, board minutes of trustees, First Unitarian Church of Des Moines, Iowa. Volume 1913-1917.)

If the resolution actually was sent to Plymouth Church and if a reply was received from any representative of that society, that reply has not been found in any Unitarian board minutes or in any other records or papers to date.

Native of England

Mr. Adlard was born April 8, 1873, at Burton-on-Trent, Lincoln, England. He died November 20, 1951, at Bath, England. He studied at Meadville Theological School before it was moved from Pennsylvania to Chicago. His early ministerial years were spent in Canada as a Methodist preacher before coming to the United States to serve Unitarian societies in New York, New York, Duluth, Minnesota, and Des Moines and Sioux City in Iowa.

Mr. Adlard returned to England and was minister of Trim Street Chapel (Unitarian) in Bath, where he died November 20, 1951. He and Laura Service Judge were married on October 17, 1899, at Newark, Nottinghamshire, England. A son, Eric J., is deceased. Two daughters are Mrs. Laitstill Sharp (Monica) and Mrs. Robert J. Vandervel (Olive).

Mrs. Adlard died October 1, 1958, in Chicago, Illinois. Her remains were interred in a crypt in the First Unitarian edifice in that city.

They Come And Go

Donald Lothrop succeeded Mr. Adlard and served one year as an interim minister. He was 24 years old, unmarried and a graduate of Tufts College and Crane Theological School. He came to Des Moines from the Universalist Church in Markesan, Wisconsin.

On the same day, December 17, 1928, that Mr. Lothrop was named, members of the society were given copies of proposed articles of re-incorporation. They were approved April 12, 1929.

There were some lean years during the Great Depression but somehow the society weathered the storm. Charles J. Dutton was named minister on May 28, 1929, just a few months before the world collapsed economically. A membership meeting on November 5, 1933, could muster only 19 persons. Mr. Dutton resigned as of December 31.

Mr. Dutton was both a minister and a lawyer. He was born August 22, 1888, at Fall River, Massachusetts. Albany Law School gave him a LLB degree in 1909. He was ordained as a minister in 1910. He served Unitarian societies in Little Compton, Rhode Island, 1913-1914, Rensselaer, 1914-1917, and Troy, 1917-1921, both in New York state and in Erie, Pennsylvania, 1921-1929. He came to Des Moines in 1929 and remained through 1933. He was with the Pennsylvania State Historical Society, 1936-1940.

Author of a number of books, Mr. Dutton married Laura E. Meiggs, on April 16, 1910. They were parents of one son. Mr. Dutton died at Fall River, Massachusetts, August 21, 1964.

Unitarianism on the Radio

Aron S. Gilmartin came from Chicago in the spring of 1934 and remained as minister one year. In February of that year Radio Station WHO of Des Moines offered to broadcast Unitarian services in April or May. WHO has continued to do this annually, with only one or two interruptions, since that time although the broadcasts have been provided at other months. They have been in January since 1969.

There were only 36 members in attendance at the meeting in March 1935 when Mr. Gilmartin's resignation was submitted and accepted.

Mr. Gilmartin was born in Boston, Massachusetts in 1910. He attended the Boston Public Latin School and received a bachelor of arts degree from Harvard University in 1931. He also received a bachelor of divinity degree from Meadville Theological School in 1933. In addition he attended the University of Chicago Divinity School and the School of Social Responsibility.

During the time that Mr. Gilmartin was in Des Moines he helped to organize the Iowa Civil Liberties Union and was its first secretary. He was active in the Iowa Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and its efforts to improve the conditions of blacks.

Mr. Gilmartin is the father of three children by a former marriage (Helen Lasker was his wife when he was in Des Moines). David, Alice and Peter Ward. His present wife is Eva Wilder, formerly of Seattle, Washington.

E. Burdette Backus

Election of E. Burdette Backus was made at a special membership meeting June 30, 1935. He remained until the spring of 1938 when he resigned to accept the ministry of the Unitarian Society in Indianapolis, Indiana, where he remained until 1953 when ill health interrupted his activities.

When Mr. Backus was in Des Moines, and largely because of his efforts, there was a great improvement in the format, preparation and appearance of literature published for distribution by the American Unitarian Association.

During the same period Eleanor F. Gordon was named minister emerita. She had been active during the tenure of Miss Safford who had been slowed down a great deal by ill health.

Mr. Backus was born December 17, 1888, at Blanchester, Ohio. He died July 7, 1955. He received his bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan in 1909, his B. D. from Meadville in 1912 and was awarded a doctor of divinity degree in 1940. He and Irene Mart Garratt were married July 25, 1914. They were the parents of two daughters.

Dr. Backus served the Lawrence, Kansas, Unitarian Society, 1913-1917, Erie, Pennsylvania, 1917-1920, was in Los Angeles, California, 1920-1930, and was with the Humanist Society of Chicago 1933-1934 before coming to Des Moines where he remained until going to Indianapolis in 1938. He was president of the American Humanist Society 1944-1946.

Karl A. Bach

So, that year (1938), Des Moines Unitarians looked to the east for a successor to Dr. Backus. And on October 9 elected Karl A. Bach of Scituate, Massachusetts. He was here less than a year when the Kremlin and Hitler invaded and divided Poland.

That had effects as far away as Iowa, and it made things difficult for almost everyone. Then the United States became involved, and that made ordinary domestic things worse.

But in spite of all that the Des Moines Unitarians were able to display a strong example of independence and strength. For some time before June 1944, financial aid had been supplied to the Des Moines society by the American Unitarian Association in Boston. But when the Des Moines trustees were notified at that time the subsidy would be reduced to \$30 a month for the year ahead and to \$15 a month following that, the trustees adopted a resolution which read:

"Inasmuch as the A. U. A. subsidy of \$30 a month for one year ahead and to \$15 a month following that is so inadequate to accomplish any real aid that we shall try to stand on our own feet."

Many members at that time expressed the belief that the decision to go alone was the catalyst that has resulted in the growth and strength of the Des Moines Unitarian Church from that day to this.

Mr. Bach resigned February 20, 1944, and Lon Ray Call, then minister-at-large for the A. U. A., came for a few months while search was made for a minister.

Mr. Bach is a native of Madison, Wisconsin, born June 7, 1908. Coe College of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, conferred a degree of bachelor of arts on him in 1931. He continued his studies at Harvard for three more years. He and Margaret Avedonach were married August 15, 1933, at Swampscott, Mass. Four children are Karl Felix Bach, Mrs. Ronald Stabler (Christine Margaret), Mrs. Phillip Middleton (Mary Bell), and Stephen Edward Bach.

Mr. Bach was accepted into full membership in the Unitarian ministry in May 1933 during May meetings held that year in Tremont Temple, Boston, Mass., when George Patterson was head of the department of the ministry. He began his ministry in Scituate July 1, 1933, and retired from the Salem Acres Community Church (Universalist), Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1970. Mr. and Mrs. Bach now (1977) reside in Portland, Oregon.

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8,000 Overlays and 30,000 Buttons

shipped 4,200 pounds of clothing to Czechoslovakia

replaced with plain buttons

nightly broadcast following his 10 P.M. news report,

in Pine Hill, Alabama.

The above information was obtained from the following sources:

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Chapel at the time of his death in 1941

In 1948 women of Unity Circle collected more clothes and sent them to Trim Street. The gift was acknowledged in a letter to Mr. Butler, dated February 7, 1949, by Ellen R. Linseley, Chairperson, who wrote:

"Will you convey to the members of your congregation, who have so generously sent gifts of clothing again to us at Trim Street, our very grateful thanks? I wish you could see the great store for coats for a warm coat and other woollies. Then, too, there are for shoes and slippers, and the raincoat which are great gifts to our members.

We are in love with the patch-work quilt. It is going to a home in the country where the father suffered greatly in the war. But they make the best of everything and the cottage is beautiful. It is an old-fashioned. So the quilt will look warm on the bed of a dear little boy.

"I did not mention the warm dressing gown which is a god-send to one of our old members who has been laid up for a year and a half through an accident and has never had a dressing gown before. And what a marvelously lined coat. We could not possibly obtain such a coat in England now. They are exported."

There were many cash contributions to the Service Committee in addition to all the food and clothing. One of the more noteworthy was a check for \$1,000 from an anonymous group in an unnamed town more than 80 miles from Des Moines. It was forwarded to the Service Committee in Boston.

Dainty Clothes From Babies Who Never Lived

All the help that has been recalled was a tremendous contribution by Des Moines Unitarians, aided by countless persons in all walks of life and the adherents of many religious philosophies.

And then there is the story of baby clothes belonging to two infants who never lived long enough to wear them.

The story began in January, 1891, when Charles T. Mason, a successful clothing merchant in Boone brought his young bride home to Iowa. By 1946 more than 50 years had elapsed into the past since the young wife had spent many joyous hours making delicate clothes for a baby who was expected. But the infant did not live. A year went by and another baby was expected. This time neither baby nor mother survived.

The heart-broken husband and father carefully packed the tiny garments in a child's toy trunk, then 50 years old, wrapped it securely with heavy paper and stored it in the attic of the silent and lonesome dwelling.

Years took their toll and the sorrowing man died in 1946. A niece, well along in years herself, found the trunk in the attic where it had gathered dust for so many years. She had learned of the work the Des Moines Unitarian women were doing in sending clothing to Europe. So she brought the heirloom trunk and its precious contents to Des Moines and left them at the church building.

"Perhaps they will be of some help to some baby in Europe," she explained.

Women. At the time, who knew fine needle-work, described the baby clothes as some of the finest they had ever seen. The 50-year-old and never used layette was displayed for a short time at the church building and in the baby department at the Younkers department store. Then it was forwarded by tender and loving hands to an unknown and un-named infant in Europe.

While all the relief efforts were under way, Mr. Butler was also busy in other fields. He gave valuable help to potential Unitarians at Ames in the formation of their Fellowship, one of the first in the country and he went there frequently on Sunday afternoons to conduct services. The Ames Unitarians now have a meeting house of their own.

Mr. Butler also was active in defending religious liberty elsewhere. When deputy sheriffs blocked efforts of Jehovah's Witnesses to meet in the town park at Lacsua, Iowa, in 1946 Mr. Butler, then president of the Iowa Civil Liberties Union, denounced the action from the Unitarian platform.

And a year later he was active in defending a Pacific Junction school teacher who had been found guilty of unlawful assembly in connection with an attempt to defend a black man who had been ordered to leave the town.

But Mr. Butler had visions of greater service and resigned from his Des Moines ministry in June of 1948 to become minister at large for the American Unitarian Association. His departure was marked by an editorial in the Des Moines Tribune captioned "We'll Miss Grant Butler", which read:

"Many people far outside his own small flock at the Unitarian Church will miss the Rev. Grant A. Butler when he leaves from Des Moines for wider responsibilities.

"In his four brief years here he has been a good citizen as well as a notable minister. It took three paragraphs in the news columns just to list the offices he holds in Des Moines civic and welfare organizations. That's a lot for the busy minister of one church to grace. In this case, it was no mere token participation, either. He gives himself, not just his name.

"Nor did he fall into the temptation, so easy in a 'social gospel' church, to give too much time to 'causes' and neglect his ministry. He has not been afraid to tackle things nobody else would--whether because they were a lot of work, or because they were dynamite."

Windswept and Lonely Spot

Mr. Butler was born March 3, 1903, in Warsaw, New York. Although his early religious training was fundamentalist Christian, he sought higher education and after receiving degrees in art and in theology at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, he did two additional years of graduate study in the Divinity School of the University of Chicago and at Andover Theological School.

It was at McMaster that he met and later married Calla Crawford, a native of Nipette, Manitoba. They continued as a team for liberal religion to the day of his death June 5, 1967, at Ninette, where the two spent 20 summers at their cottage on the shores of Pelican Lake.

Mr. Butler's body is buried in a windswept and somewhat lonely graveyard on the endless plains of Manitoba where a solitary visitor can meditate about the complex problems of the world and at the same time look down with quiet contemplation on the peaceful little village and lake in the only depression in that vast expanse of Canadian landscape.

In a memorial service at St. Larian headquarters in Boston Robert S. Willey of the Department of Extension and Maintenance of the Unitarian Universalist Association, said of Mr. Butler:

"It has always been difficult for me to picture Grant, in his youth, as an evangelical street corner preacher. But that he was, preaching out the gospel as only the Midwest Baptists of 40 years ago could. It is remarkable, but he found his way toward liberalism not because, in the beginning, he doubted the message he was preaching, but because he wondered why educated people did not respond to what he was saying."

Mr. Butler was ordained in 1940 during his ministry of the liberal St. Paul Congregational Church of Chicago. Much of the time after the Butlers departed from Des Moines in 1948 was spent with the American Unitarian Association Department of Extension and Church Maintenance. For a time he was minister at large helping troubled congregations solve their problems. In 1949 he was appointed director of the department. While there he initiated the policies that resulted in the remarkable growth of Unitarian Universalist societies in the 1950s and 1960s.

During that ten years of his life he had the satisfaction of personally supervising the organizing of 24 new church or fellowship societies. George Marshall, minister of the Church of the Larger Fellowship, has written of him:

"He was probably the greatest organizer of new churches in our denomination's history."

Mrs. Butler was married to Ralph W. Burhoe on April 6, 1969 in Boston. The first Mrs. Burhoe had died in 1967. The two couples had been warm friends when both worked together in Arlington Street Church in Boston.

Charles W. Phillips
And a New Meeting House

Unitarian services were conducted through the fall and winter of 1948-1949 without a minister while efforts were being made to find a successor to Mr. Butler. During that period Dr. Charles H. Ritchey, head of the Drake University history department and a member of the society, conducted many of the Sunday services.

In the end the ministerial selection committee came to Charles W. Phillips, who was in charge of the youth program at University Christian Church in Des Moines. Committee members had learned that Mr. Phillips, who had served as a chaplain in the Navy, was ready to become identified with Unitarianism. Members of the society accepted the recommendation of the committee and he was elected minister on March 29, 1949.

Mr. Phillips was active in furthering the cause of Unitarianism and at the same time he was able to assist in many worthwhile programs.

Shortly after Mr. Phillips became minister, the members of the board of trustees endorsed a resolution on anti gambling which had been adopted earlier at the conference of the Iowa Unitarian Association in Davenport. The resolution had commended Iowa Attorney General Robert Larson for his efforts to halt gambling and the use of slot machines and punchboards in Iowa. And it was during that period a workshop for experimental drama was organized by a number of members of the society under the name of Drama Workshop. It has been active from its beginning.

Up to the time that Mr. Phillips began his duties, the earlier ministers had usually found their own housing. But a growing feeling for a parsonage prompted action and the society purchased a dwelling at 2600 Thirty fifth street in December 1949. Although the location was remote from the meeting house, it was the best available at the time, cost and financing considered.

Building Problems

By 1953-54 the church society was facing some rather heavy building maintenance problems. Then the future of the society was changed in the fall of 1954.

Mr. Phillips was approached by J. Paul Neal, a Des Moines real estate man, with a hint that an unnamed client was interested in buying the church property. There was some hesitancy on the part of members about disposing of the building and grounds, but in the end the offer to buy had increased to \$136,000. Members were confronted with a difficult question. Parking facilities were inadequate and estimates of rehabilitating the meeting house were as high as \$40,000. The decision was reached January 24, 1955, when members voted 87 to 0 to accept the offer. Purchaser was then revealed as the Iowa Farm Bureau Federation.

Where to go was the next problem. A number of sites were studied, available for \$25,000 or more. None seemed to be wholly satisfactory. It was then that Amos B. Emery, a Des Moines architect, whose parents had long been identified with the society, offered to give a four and a half acre piece of ground on Bell Avenue, just east of Fleur Drive as a memorial to his mother and father. The trustees, invested with authority granted by the members at the January 24 meeting, accepted the offer.

The last service in the High street building was held June 17, 1956. Mr. Phillips had announced a few days earlier that he was resigning to accept an offer as minister of the Omaha Unitarian society. The role of ministers and the ministry was part of Mr. Phillips' final sermon to the Des Moines congregation. Philosophizing on what a person does when he or she joins a church society, he said

"The first full-time minister of this church, Sylvan Stanley Husting, was installed in the form of a marriage service between the minister and the church. Never having been installed ever, I do not know exactly what form I would try to follow, but it would not be that of a wedding. That implies that leaving for reasons other than death is a divorce, and that is an imagery for which I do not care.

"If a minister is married to a church it should be the Church Universal, not a local parish. Ministers serve churches, a ministry serves a church. When you join a church you join not a minister but a tradition of the ministry, among other things.

"If I would not feel married to this or any other parish, I almost feel married to this building. It has provided that same combination of frustration and affection which usually makes up love. I have spent some of the pleasantest hours with you in it, painting, carpentering, glazing windows, sanding these floors. One night from sundown to the next morning sunrise when time was running out on us. She has had a native dignity to respond to us. Also, I am deeply aware of the human history and the church history embodied here. My hope is that the building is torn down soon after we leave it. She is a fine lady and should not stand lying in idleness or for any other purpose."

Temporary Location

Moving out of an old home means finding a new one. So a place had to be provided for services while a new place was under construction. Members of Temple B'Nai Bishurim again offered their home as a place for services, but the trustees settled for rented space in the Young Women's Christian Association building at Fifth and High streets, just two blocks from the old structure from which the congregation was moving.

After Mr. Emery, as architect, had drafted plans approved by the trustees, contracts were let and construction begun in the summer of 1956, with costs estimated to be near \$225,000. General overall work was by the Lovejoy Construction Company with John Lovejoy of the company being an active member of the society. He later served as president of the society.

Financing was by proceeds from the purchase of the old property by the Iowa Farm Bureau Federation, after a loan from the American Unitarian Association of \$14,000 was paid, by special campaign for contributions which netted better than \$60,000, and by a loan from a Des Moines bank.

During the time that Mr. Phillips was Des Moines minister he was active in many other fields. He was a member of the Drake University Des Moines Symphony orchestra. He was elected head of the Human Betterment League of Iowa in 1950 and was named president of the Human Betterment League Federation of Georgia, Iowa, Nebraska and North Carolina in

1951. By 1956 he had become president of the Iowa Society for Mental Health and had served earlier as president of the Iowa Children's Home, later renamed the Iowa Children's and Family Services. He had also been secretary and treasurer of the Des Moines Child Guidance Center.

Mr. Phillips is one of the many men who have withdrawn from Christian denominations to become Unitarian ministers, in his case the Disciples of Christ. He was born January 29, 1913, at Sharon, Pennsylvania. His college degrees include Bethany College, B. A., 1938, University of Chicago, M. A., 1940 and B. C., 1941, and Meadville Theological School, D. D., 1961. He became the Des Moines Unitarian minister in 1949 and remained until 1956.

He was a chaplain in the Navy during the Second World War, two years in the European Theater of Operations and one year in a Naval Hospital on the West Coast.

Mr. Phillips and Ruth Elizabeth Seitzer were married January 29, 1943. They are the parents of Todd Seitzer, Anne Tannahill, and Camilla Elizabeth.

Harold Dodge Buck And the Church of Tomorrow

While the new building was being planned and construction begun, search for a minister was made and Harold Dodge Buck of Chicago was selected on December 2, 1956.

The first service in the Bell Avenue meeting house was in September 1957 with acceptance and dedication of the building on October 17.

A responsive reading, led by Robert C. Harper who was active as a trustee and board chairman during planning and construction, initiated the dedication ceremonies. Two sentences from that reading by Kenneth L. Patton, Universalist minister, writer and contributor of Responsive Readings to Hymns for the Celebration of Life, were:

"The church of tomorrow will not strive to save men from the world, it will save men in the world," and:

"The church will seek to serve the whole man and the whole community, from it there will come the hopes and ideals for a better world."

Deed to the land was delivered to John Warramaker, chairman of the trustees, by Mrs. R. D. Emery on behalf of her son. Acknowledgments were made to Mr. Emery, architect and contributor of the site, and to John Lovejoy, as the master builder.

Present, and speaking at the ceremony, were Dr. Frederick May Eliot, president of the American Unitarian Association, Ellsworth Smith, executive secretary of the Western Unitarian Conference, Victor B. Seymour, president of the Iowa Unitarian Association, and Mr. Buck, as minister.

Members and friends quickly became adjusted to the new home under the ministry of Mr. Buck. It was during this period that discussions

proposing merger of the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church of America were held throughout the country. Des Moines Unitarians participated in the discussions and on March 8, 1960, voted 75 to 4 in favor of the union. Affirmative action by the majority of the societies in Canada and the United States resulted in formation of the Unitarian Universalist Association of the two countries.

In October 1958 Mr. Buck was named chairman of a citizens' group which was seeking changes in Iowa's legal settlement law, especially repeal of the "notice to depart."

As the law stood then, if a person applied for welfare in an Iowa county without having lived therein for two years, he might be served with a "notice to depart." As chairman, Mr. Buck had expained at a committee meeting how a succession of such notices could prevent a family's legal settlement anywhere even though such a family might desperately need welfare aid. (Information from a news story in The Des Moines Tribune of October 10, 1958.)

In the spring of 1958 Iowa Governor Frederick C. Love was named Mr. Buck as one of a forty member, newly-formed governor's commission on human relations.

And in January 1959 Mr. Buck was granted a scholarship to attend a seminar on international affairs in New York City. He was one of 40 men from 17 states named to attend the seminar which had been arranged by the Church Peace Union in co-operation with the department of international affairs of the National Council of Churches, the Catholic Association for International Peace and the International Affairs Commission of the Synagogue Council of America. The scholarships were financed by a number of foundations.

On his return from New York, Mr. Buck wrote, in part, in the Des Moines Unitarian Record:

"One might hope that sessions such as these (the seminar in New York City for one) might arrive at some definite answers to the pressing problems of world peace. This we did not do, for it is highly improbable that any small group of men and women could in five days settle the affairs of the world.

"We did, however, come to a deeper understanding of the nature of the problems confronting the world today. From this it is to be hoped that each of us will be able in some measure to pass this appraisal on to others. If we can do this, then we will have justified the time and expense of our trip and work."

Help for Moslem Children Sought

Once during the time Mr. Buck was minister a request came from a doctor, in an Iowa Hospital, who was a Moslem. He was seeking material which could be used in the religious education of Moslem children in Iowa. Since Islam is a monotheistic religion, the only place the doctor and other concerned Moslems felt they could turn was to the Unitarians. He was referred to Unitarian headquarters in Boston.

Mr. Buck resigned as of December 31, 1959, to join the staff of the United Unitarian Universalist Appeal in Boston. He was born August 12, 1918, at Worcester, Massachusetts. He received a bachelor's degree from Brown University in 1940 and a bachelor of divinity degree from Meadville in 1951. He was ordained as a Unitarian minister at All Souls' Church in New York City in September 1951. He was a lieutenant in the Army in World War Two, serving in counter intelligence. He spent two years in Japan at the close of hostilities.

Jeanette Arneson of Minneapolis and Mr. Buck were married in Chicago on December 22, 1950. A son, Arne Edwin, was born July 4, 1956, in Chicago and a daughter, Kirsten Ellen, on August 26, 1959, in Des Moines.

John B. Isom
and
A Record for Length of Service

Members found a successor to Mr. Buck on June 11, 1961, when they elected John B. Isom of the Wichita, Kansas, Unitarian Church, to become their minister. He was installed on October 29, and with the help of Mrs. Isom, served faithfully until he retired on December 31, 1964, following his sixty-fifth birthday anniversary. On December 7,

Late in 1971 Mr. Isom attained to the distinction of having served as Des Moines Unitarian minister longer than any predecessor, having passed Mary Safford who had been recognized as minister from June 1899 to July 31, 1910, when she was honored with the title of pastor emerita by members at a special members' meeting.

Mr. Isom participated in many civil rights and civic activities while he was minister.

James I. Keeb, a 33-year old Unitarian minister, from Boston, Massachusetts, and two other ministers were attacked and beaten by a group of white men in Selma, Alabama, early in March 1965. The three had gone to Selma to participate in a civil rights demonstration which opposed segregation.

Mr. Keeb died from injuries received in the attack. The incident caused a storm of protest all over the country. And a massive demonstration led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was planned to be held, including a march to Montgomery, Alabama's capital, some 60 miles away.

Mr. Isom, who is a native of Alabama, spent two days and two nights in Selma, taking part in the demonstration there. On his return to Des Moines, he was quoted in a Des Moines Register news story as saying that the Negro revolt in Selma led by Dr. King, is a miracle which can only be fully appreciated by persons who have lived in Deep South communities where Negroes outnumber whites. (At that time the word "black" had not yet replaced Negro.)

Plans To Help the Poor

In April 1968 Mr. Isom publicly proposed a plan to help the poor. It called for a non-profit corporation to provide the poor with the tools, resources, training and leadership to build their own homes and to help them launch their own production and service industries in order to meet most of their economic needs.

Mr. Isom suggested financing the plan by individuals investing, without interest, one half of their savings for ten years in the corporation. He pledged to invest one-half of current savings and half of what he would save in the following ten years.

Mr. Isom served a three-year term as a member of the Des Moines Adult Education Advisory Committee. And he was elected treasurer of the Des Moines Ministerial Association for 1965.

Early in Mr. Isom's ministry it became obvious that the Thirtysixth street dwelling was not the best place for a minister at home when the church building was out on Cassady Drive. It has been mentioned earlier that the place was purchased during the ministry of Charles W. Phillips and that it was the best the society could do at that time.

So that dwelling was sold in 1966 and another purchased at 4909 S. W. Fifteenth street. The Isoms moved into the new home and

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Mindful of his contribution to the building of a better Des Moines community and of a better world

longer than that of any earlier leader since the society
on August 5, 1877

(Dated) January 9, 1975"

In addition to Miss Safford and Mr. Isom, the only other Des Moines residents who were in the service were Eleanor Gordon,

However, before the scroll was presented to Mr. Isom, one was presented to Mrs. Isom. The text of that citation re-

[illegible]

(Dated) January 3, 1975"

[illegible]

* TWO GE Wm. ... RAGE ...

Kenneth G. Hurto

Kenneth G. Hurto was selected minister of the society at a special congregational meeting August 24, 1975. The action was taken following a thorough search by the ministerial selection committee. At the time he was minister of the Greater Lafayette, Indiana, Fellowship. He began his ministry in Des Moines in November. Formal installation was on April 25, 1976.

Mr. Hurto was born May 10, 1947, in Chicago. After attending the Illinois Institute of Technology for two years, he transferred to Augustana College at Rock Island, Illinois, where he received a bachelor's degree in philosophy and political science in 1969. He was graduated with a Master of Divinity degree cum laude in 1972 by the Harvard Divinity School. He and Sandra Phelan were married August 16, 1969. They are parents of a son, Nathan Patrick, born April 3, 1976.

Even before Mr. Hurto was selected, John Cummins, settlement representative for the Unitarian Universalist Association, visited the congregation in connection with the search for a minister. He indicated that the trend in all Christian denominations, as well as in the Unitarian Universalist movement, was toward paying a housing allowance and letting the ministers provide their own housing, which would give them a tax advantage. As a result, the congregation voted to sell the dwelling on Southwest Fifteenth Street. That is why when the votes came to Des Moines they selected their own dwelling at 2838 Southwest Miller.

A noteworthy event early in 1977 was the organization of an Iowa chapter of the American Humanist Association in which Mr. Hurto and several members of the congregation participated. Formation of the Humanist Association can be traced back to a sermon by Curtis Reese in 1917 when he was Des Moines minister.

100 YEARS IN DES MOINES

Plans were begun early in 1977 for the one hundredth anniversary of the Des Moines Society and Mr. Hurto took an active part in those plans.

A service in May was based on Sunday services of years ago, including use of part of the sermon that Sylvan S. Huntington gave when he was installed as the first regular minister in 1880.

An excellent brief report of Des Moines Unitarianism came to a conclusion midway in a year-long observance of the centennial with an informal celebration Sunday, August 7, to commemorate the beginning on Sunday, August 5, 1877.

The event was highlighted by a proclamation issued by Des Moines Mayor Richard E. Olson who proclaimed Sunday, August 7, as Unitarian Day in Des Moines.

The text of that proclamation follows:

On August 5, 1877, thirty citizens met in a hall in Union Block, downtown Des Moines, to hear a new concept religious movement being fostered by the Iowa Unitarian Association, and

From that small group, nine persons formally organized the Unitarian Church of Des Moines, now known as the First Unitarian

Church, located at Bell Avenue and Candy Drive, and

Unitarians are basically very liberal, free-thinking persons united in the spirit of religious freedom, promoting human kindness, human dignity and love, constantly searching for and being a voice for truth, and

the members associated themselves in a bond of union stressing morality and religion as a practical aspect of everyday living indicated by their spirit of love, help and respect of other persons, and

the group has grown through the years and on August 5, 1977, celebrates its 100th anniversary.

Now, therefore, I, Richard E. Olson, mayor of the City of Des Moines, Iowa, do hereby proclaim Sunday, August 7, 1977, as

UNITARIAN DAY IN DES MOINES

and urge all our people, each in their own way, to recognize that the principles which the Unitarians have set as their goal- truth, religious freedom and the basic rights of individuals- are worthwhile and a part of the effort of all denominations

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ROSTER OF DES MOINES UNITARIAN MINISTERS

John R. Effinger, 1877-1880 Field worker, organizer of the Des Moines Unitarian Church, and part-time minister

Sylvan S. Hunting, 1880-1886. First full time minister

Ida C. Bultin, 1886-1891.

Leon A. Harvey, 1891-1898

Oscar Clute, 1898

Mary A. Safford, 1899-1910

Maria H. Jenney, assistant to Miss Safford

Eleanor Gordon, relief minister for Miss Safford.

Gertrude von Petzold, 1908-1910.

Everett Dean Martin, 1911-1915

Curtis W. Keesen, 1915-1919

Edmund H. Keesen, 1920-1924.

Henry J. Adlard, 1924-1928

Donald Lothrop, 1928-1929

Charles J. Dutton, 1929-1933.

Aron S. Gilmartin, 1934-1935.

E. Burdette Backus, 1935-1938.

Karl A. Bach, 1938-1944.

Grant A. Butler, 1944-1948.

Charles W. Phillips, 1949-1956.

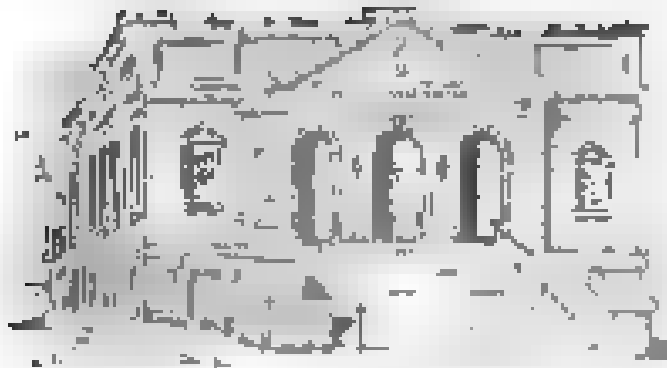
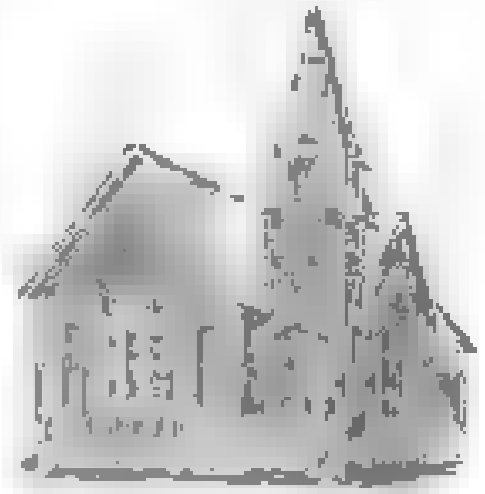
Harold Dodge Buck, 1957-1960.

John B. Leom, 1961-1974.

Kenneth G. Hurto, 1975.

THE THREE MEETING HOUSES OF THE DES MOINES UNITARIAN CHURCH

The first building was located
at Fifteenth and Linden streets.
Dedicated December 3, 1882.



Sketch by George Shane

Second meeting house was
at Eleventh and High streets.
Dedicated April 3, 1905.

Present religious home of
Des Moines Unitarians at
Bell Avenue and Cassady Dr
Dedicated October 17, 1957



Sketch by Frank Miller

In 1961 The Des Moines Tribune asked Professor Leonard Wolf, then head of the department of architecture at Iowa State University in Ames, to select what he considered the ten best buildings in Des Moines. No. 8 on the list was the new home of Unitarians. Of it Dr. Wolf said:

"This simple and dignified building with its graceful lines makes excellent use of the terrain around it. It says, 'Unlike he usually does, Man has been here and respects the site.'"

VALOR 8. 7. 8. 7

Words and music by
HENRY J. ADLARD, 1873-1944

Allegro

First system of musical notation for 'Valor'. It features a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 2/4 time signature. The melody is written on a single staff. The lyrics 'God Strength' are written below the staff, with 'God' under the first measure and 'Strength' under the second measure. The music consists of two measures, each containing a quarter note followed by a half note.

Second system of musical notation for 'Valor'. It continues the melody from the first system. The lyrics 'For our strength we are' are written below the staff, with 'For' under the first measure, 'our' under the second, 'strength' under the third, and 'we' under the fourth. The music consists of four measures, each containing a quarter note followed by a half note.

Third system of musical notation for 'Valor'. It continues the melody from the second system. The lyrics 'Gods strength we are' are written below the staff, with 'Gods' under the first measure, 'strength' under the second, and 'we are' under the third. The music consists of three measures, each containing a quarter note followed by a half note.

For at least fifty years services of Des Moines Unitarian Church have been concluded on many Sundays with a Hymn of Valor. The words were written and the music composed by Henry J. Adlard, minister to the society 1926-1928

BELIEFS AND UNBELIEFS

In the First Unitarian Church of Des Moines, Iowa

How to find a better way of life for all Mankind has been the aim of Des Moines Unitarians since August 3, 1877, when nine religious liberals organized themselves into a church society.

Spurred by the statement of purpose of the Iowa Unitarian Association, which had been launched at Burlington two months earlier, these Des Moines religious prospectors, and the ones who have followed them, have maintained that resolve down through the years. That statement reads as follows:

Whereas, entire freedom is necessary to the growth of religion in the souls of men and whereas, creed-bound organizations are an obstacle to human progress and happiness,

"Resolved, that we hereby unite ourselves into a permanent society for the purpose of building up free churches, based on practical righteousness, in the State of Iowa."

Perhaps the best way to look at that pledge is to review what some of the Des Moines Unitarian ministers have asserted. Thoughts of a few of these early ministers are not available, but from many records and later publications it is possible to put together several declarations which you will find on the following pages in the sequence of those ministries in Des Moines.

Bonds of Union

Instead of creeds or dogmas many Unitarian churches adopt Bonds of Union. That is what the nine individuals who organized the Des Moines church did. The original statement of purpose read:

Recognizing the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Mankind, receiving Jesus as teacher, seeking the spiritual truth as the guide to our lives and in the hope of immortal life, we associate ourselves together to maintain the public worship of God and to promote the welfare of Humanity."

Des Moines Unitarians retained that statement until January 1896 when members, at their annual meeting, eliminated references to God, Jesus and immortality, and revised their Bond of Union to read:

"We hereby associate ourselves together for the study and practice of morality and religion, as interpreted by the growing insight and the noblest lives of Humanity, hoping thereby to prove helpful one to another and to promote truth, righteousness and love in the world.

(Now, on the following pages, in the sequence of their tenures, is what some of the Des Moines Unitarian ministers have said.)

PRACTICAL RELIGION

By SYLVAN STANLEY GOULDING
(First regular minister of the New Haven Unitarian Church,
1824-1886,

action.

The church is a school, and all in it are supposed to be either
enough there must be differences of opinion.

truth being its own authority.

ask for the "sympathies of religion"
the husks and the raiment for the wheat and the life,

it was light outside it was dark inside,

and many a jury has come to a right conclusion by following a
but a

A Premise That Is Called Irrational

If you ask what a rational conviction is, we answer it is one that is based on a fact supported by a reasonable amount of evidence that may be tried by a rational method accepted in a court of law.

A conclusion based on the assumption that a child had no earthly father could be logical from the premise, but it could not be reasonable because the premise is irrational. Such doctrines can be taught only by accepting the authority of the priest to teach them. The premise on which they rest is extra-human and extra-rational. We have no dealings with such methods of studying Christianity. The theory of the superhuman source of religious truth was first imposed on the credulous, and it has since been taught as an inheritance.

The difficulty is that all the plain teachings of our religion are overlaid with creeds about God and Christ, and so on to the end of the thirty-nine articles, and the really essential is made to give place to the form, the spirit to the letter, the substance to the show.

Reducing religion to its moral teachings, to its great life, we simplify it wonderfully, so that the ignorant can understand it without being mystified with the enigmas of a victorious ascension, or the absurdity of three persons being in one being, absurd as judged by any common use of language.

The moral element of thought is the universal quality in all religions, and hence the facility by which the different persons can accept the same moral code, but when we come to a creed drawn from the letter of the Bible there is no end to controversy.

Soul of Religion Defined

We enthroned the good and the true in the affections, and then we bow at their shrine as to the holiest and best. Such is the piety which gives dignity to purpose and weight to character. We would make charity the soul of religion, the substance of religion is charity out of a pure heart and an unfeigned faith. If we study religion for these ends, we will practice what we believe, we shall express ourselves. The virtues and grace of life appear in actions.

Let it be understood that the qualities of character are human before they are Christian. The quality that gives value to the word Christian is greater than the name. As mercy is more than formal worship, as fidelity is more than belief, as charity is more than knowledge, as the greater includes the less, these include all the excellencies of the best Christian.

What is now said may be enough to show that we not only make our protest against the dogmatism of the historic Christian Church but we have a definite aim in the study, teaching and practice of religion... As to the methods we do not build a pit in eternity and put a devil therein to tend the fire, and teach that it is the chief aim of Man to escape from that pit and the keeper thereof. Neither do we make a golden temple over yonder, and appeal to men's cupidity to induce them to choose an apartment therein.

Our liberal churches are organized to prove by experiment that practical religion, not theology, is the true bond of fellowship. We emphasize the common purpose, and though charity is more expensive than theology, it also yields a richer income.

AN OBLIGATION TO SEEK THE TRUTH

MARY A. SAFFORD

Des Moines Unitarian minister, 1899-1910.

(From a news report in The Des Moines Register and Leader,
November 23, 1908)

Taking the Pilgrim Fathers as her subject, the Rev. Mary Safford pointed out the value of religious liberty in her sermon at the Unitarian Church. She said in part:

Human beings prize most highly what it costs them most to win. What they gain easily as an inheritance they seldom appreciate. The Pilgrims purchased freedom at a great cost. We have inherited this freedom. For this freedom there is danger that we may not appreciate our heritage as to guard it devotedly.

"Eternal vigilance is the price of religious freedom not the less than of civil liberty. As we thank God for freedom to worship according to our individual consciences, let us highly resolve that this freedom will maintain, cost what it may.

We must see that neither in the state nor in any school or college supported by the state is any form of religious belief aided and upheld at the expense of any other faith.

"If our orthodox brothers and sisters prefer not to fellowship with us in giving thanks on Thanksgiving Day to the God who loves us all, we make no protest. We can offer praise and thanksgiving in our church not less sincerely and devotedly than they express their gratitude in their churches.

A Solemn Duty To Protest

But when Unitarians or adherents of any other religious faith, because of their faith, are discriminated against in politics or in any institution supported wholly or in part by public taxation, it becomes our solemn duty to protest against such injustice, by word, or deed. We must not take our religious freedom for granted if we would preserve and strengthen it. Let not a dearly bought heritage be lost through indifference.

Because civil and religious freedoms are bound up together we must not be content merely to conserve what we now possess. Rather we must strive to hasten the coming of the day when our government will really be of the people, by the people and for the people, because every woman as well as every man will be recognized as an integral part of the nation, having the right to vote as well as to pray for the safe guarding of the land we love.

We need a deeper sense of individual responsibility. Because the truth alone can make us really free, we need a profound conviction of the obligation that rests on every human being to seek the truth."

--

Revolt from Orthodoxy

(The following paragraphs are from a history of Kossuth and Humboldt counties, published in 1884 by the Union Publishing Company of Springfield, Illinois. A copy of that history is in the Iowa State Historical Library in Des Moines. The excerpts are from pp. 790 and 791.)

... of the Lord, thy God."

... bounding ph ...

A DEMOCRATIC VIEW OF RELIGION

(From a sermon delivered in 1917.)

The theocratic view of the world order is autocratic. The human-
 ... autocrats, supreme or minor, whose favor they must curry.

In the autocratic order all happenings whatsoever
 of the will of the supreme autocrat or of the activiti-
 ... if he wants food, let him ask and perha-

Reservoirs and Water Pipes

... must be ...

This revolution in religion, from theocracy to Humanism, from autocracy to democracy, has been brewing for a long time. Aristotle believed in "the inner principle", Lamarck in "the slow working of the animals", Darwin in "natural selection", Wallace in "the spiritual nature", Nietzsche in the "will to power" -- all of which are simply different ways of expressing the inherent democratic movement in life.

Democratic religion insists that all foreign power and autocratic accretions be thrown off and that the adherents of democratic religion assert themselves as free spirits voluntarily co-operating for the common salvation. Democratic religion is freedom consecrated to the creation of truth. Democratic religion seeks knowledge through experience and thought. Democratic religion seeks holiness through good-will and purity of motive. Democratic religion seeks not the Kingdom of God but the Democracy of Humanity.

The road traveled by democratic religion is scientific, not theological. The theological way is autocratic, the scientific, democratic. The righteousness of the theological way is imputed, that of the scientific way, achieved. In the ideal aspiration, in the heroic inspiration, in the tireless labor, in the innumerable sacrifices, in the countless achievements of science is the glory of democratic religion, and the worship of democratic religion is the splendid reverence which sanctifies men as they seek to unravel the eternal mysteries.

The method of conveyance in democratic religion is human effort, not divine intervention. Any dependence on any autocratic spiritual power to do anything for Mankind is disastrous. Man in his own strength must face and solve his problems. Man in his own strength must work out his own salvation. There is no carriage that may be brought down from Heaven. No angels will push Man along. The good fairies are gone forever. Recognizing this, science has quietly gone about the solution of pressing problems, and wonderful achievements have been attained....

Aim of Democratic Religion

The end to be attained by democratic religion is human welfare. The Westminster divines gave the first place in their catechism to the question "What is the chief end of man?" Then they gave the answer. The chief end of man is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever. The meaning of this answer, according to Thomas Watson, a British Divine of the days of Cromwell, consists in four things: appreciation, adoration, affection and subjection. "This," he says "is the yearly rent we pay to the crown of heaven. According to this the chief end of Man is to forever bargain with God, to forever receive certain things for certain rental. The autocrat wants praise and worship, and the subject wants to go to Heaven, in both cases it is a matter of "revenue only."

Autocratic religion takes the form of "other worldliness." According to this religion we are not now living, we are preparing to live after death. Among the questions most frequently asked in autocratic religion is "Are you prepared to die?" Among the texts most frequently used is "Prepare to meet thy God." Even the children are taught to sing "I want to be an angel and with the angels stand." Life is spoken of as a period of probation.

Democratic religion takes the form of this-worldness. Should we glorify God? Yes--if that means co-operating with the eternal forces in producing an ideal Human race, otherwise, No. Should we enjoy God forever? Yes--if that means that the eternal abides in the temporal and the temporal in the eternal, otherwise, No. Democratic religion says seize the "eternal now," live in the "eternal-now," for the "eternal tomorrow" never is.

The chief end of Man, according to democratic religion, is to promote human welfare here and now.

THE CHOICE FOR AN HONEST MAN

By EDWARD H. REEMAN

Des Moines Unitarian minister, 1920-1924.

Following is an excerpt from a pamphlet by Mr. Reeman, "WHERE DO I STAND ON RELIGION?", which was published by the American Unitarian Association shortly after the close of the First World War.

The choice that faces an honest man today who is as willing to take as much pains to understand religious developments as he would be to understand political differences, is the choice between old forms and organizations seeking above all else to perpetuate the creeds of the past and new forms seeking wider organizations and concerned above all else with life as it is today, with religion as a vital concern and effective influence and with that larger understanding of life and of purpose in living that the newer knowledge makes possible and the newer achievements of Mankind bring near.

Golf on Sunday

You can have your golf game on Sunday, if you want it, and your cheater or card party any other day without fear of Hell in consequence, without losing vital interest in religion and without divorcing yourself from its activities. You can take a man's view and a healthy interest in every genuine human activity without cutting yourself off either from the influence or from the service of religion.

The newer religion does not want you and has no use for you unless you are first and foremost a true man alive to every interest that goes to make up human life and to plant Man a foot on surer achievement.

The God it preaches is not the god of pampered favorites and outcast sinners but a God who sets men hard tasks and gives them inward power to battle through to righteous victory.

The God it preaches is not the god of a doomed world and damned creation, but the God of a struggling, progressing, achieving humanity slowly winning its way to nobler heights of being and sublimer ideals of life.

It conceives its task not in terms of the conservation of
 the old, but in terms of the creation of the new. It is
 not a religion of the past, but a religion of the future.
 It is a religion of the living, not a religion of the dead.
 It is a religion of the common welfare of mankind.

The Old of Religion

For ages the world has been a place of suffering and
 of knowledge.

It is a place of suffering and of knowledge.
 It is a place of suffering and of knowledge.
 It is a place of suffering and of knowledge.

It is a place of suffering and of knowledge.
 It is a place of suffering and of knowledge.
 It is a place of suffering and of knowledge.
 It is a place of suffering and of knowledge.
 It is a place of suffering and of knowledge.

It is a place of suffering and of knowledge.
 It is a place of suffering and of knowledge.
 It is a place of suffering and of knowledge.
 It is a place of suffering and of knowledge.
 It is a place of suffering and of knowledge.

FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF HUMAN DIGNITY

By ARON S. GILMARTIN
 Des Moines Unitarian minister, 1934-1935

"I have always taken seriously the teaching of Channing about the
 dignity and worth of each individual human being. Accordingly I have
 felt that part of the Unitarian religious obligation is to effect such
 social changes as will enhance such dignity and worth."

—The foundation of Mr. Gilmartin's Unitarianism

Although he was one of the unsuccessful candidates for the presi-
 dency of the Unitarian Universalist Association in 1969, Mr. Gilmartin
 did express his liberal religious feelings before the election when he
 said:

This is a new day. A new perception of our role in society and history is required. A fresh statement of our identity and purpose as a religious movement must be made. I would share some of the insights which move me and which, when fully grasped and understood, I believe may be capable of shaping a new and meaningful future.

Too long have we allowed ourselves to be defined simply as doctrinal negations of theological comeouters. Too long have we recited our list of 'I do not believe's.'

This new day is to be affirmed with positive statements and commitments of the deed. This is the time for saying 'Yes'

'Yes--to the efforts of the oppressed and exploited peoples who now claim the dignity and worth for each individual human we have so long taught.

'Yes' to the aspirations of people everywhere to control their own lives and destinies.

'Yes--to the ethical impulses of youth who have vision of a new kingdom,' a society grounded in humanistic values which transcends white prejudice and Western materialism.

'Yes--to the comeouters of today who are leaving the churches of social irrelevance and moral impotence.

'These 'yesses' must be made viable by our deeds.'

A CHURCH WITHOUT A CREED

(A statement by E. BURDETTE BACKUS,
Oss Moines Unitarian Minister, 1935-1937)

Our church has no creed. Its members are convinced freedom is the indispensable condition of wholesome spiritual life for man. We insist on being just as free to make discoveries in religion as the scientist is in biology or chemistry.

If the advent of a new truth requires scrapping of old doctrines, we are ready to make the necessary readjustments. No creed bars the way. Ours is a church "in which all do not think alike but in which all men alike think."

Precious as is freedom, we do not regard it as an end in itself but rather as a condition in which alone we can fulfill our function, which is to enrich the individual life, and to improve the social order.

Everything that contributes to upbuilding a human life we regard as the legitimate object of our enthusiasm and practical endeavor. We are seeking to unite the age-old idealism of the human heart with the modern intellectual outlook.

Wherever a progressive and humanitarian work is being done in the world there is our religious fellowship. We meet together to think clearly and feel deeply about the vital issues of life in order that we may act more clearly in accord with our ideas.

Ours is a church conceived in the spirit of freedom, guided by intelligence, enthusiastically devoted to the service of Man. It is embarked on a high adventure and welcomes daring souls to its company.

THE ONLY SALVATION

Mr. Backus declared in his sermon on April 3, 1938

"What is so horrible about being an agnostic? I do not see how an honest man can be anything but an agnostic. It is just ignorance and superstition that makes agnosticism shunned as something detrimental to the human race. When will the world get over trying to get salvation from outside this world and learn that the only salvation is that which is within ourselves?"

IS YOUR RELIGION BIG ENOUGH FOR YOUR WORLD?

(From a sermon by KARL A. BACH,
Des Moines Unitarian minister, 1938-1944)

"Is your religion big enough for your world?"

If you define religion as institutional, or as an experience set apart from the world in which you live, then your answer is "No."

But if you define religion as a power which is interfused with the whole of life, which brings man a deeper, truer and more enduring adjustment to the appreciation of life, then your answer is "Yes."

If our religion cannot give succor to all peoples of the world, liberating their spirits and establishing harmony between their minds and the Universal Mind, without dictating what they shall believe in dogma, creed and holy writ, then our religion is not big enough for our world. Then we are guilty of setting one man against his neighbor as are rulers of the world who set nation against nation. We can never gain freedom for all peoples of the world as long as we use that freedom for our own selfish ends or gain that freedom at the expense of others.

The Way to Security

I believe this world is in a more healthful state of mind today than it has been for centuries, chiefly because we are finding it necessary to consider the entire world in our present outlook. The more widespread the present war (World War Two) becomes the sooner shall we discover the common needs of Mankind. We are learning that a nation, an institution, a family unit, an individual is more secure if it or they champion the security of all others.

We are struggling today between two conflicting points of view. One is exacting, arbitrary, uncompromising and intolerant of mistakes. It is totalitarian or authoritarianism. It is found in religion as well as in societies and political states.

The other point of view is experimental, tolerant, often self-satisfied, even selfish--but at least its best is willing to let truth and fact lead the way.

Our Opinion of Religion

There are those who look on religion as above the social and the cultural. To them it is miraculous and not of this world. It is mystical and therefore alien to the commonplace and it is unique.

It should mind its own affairs and remain unspotted from the world or it will be absorbed and lost if it mingles with "earthly and transient things". It has nothing to do with politics, business or social reform. It concerns individual morality, but only through obedience to its own rules, not the world's.

It consists of worship and prayer and observance of holy days. It is life apart, like an altar, and thus never to be defiled by the dust of the street or the stir of men's doubts.

The foregoing is the opinion of most of the clergy and many of the laymen of the vast majority of Christian churches, whose members profess a belief in the deity of Christ.

But there are other persons, notably represented by Unitarians, who have come to regard Jesus as just a man, a human being and nothing more, who worked for social reform--there are these individuals who identify religion with the whole of life from which it cannot be lifted any more than a tree can be lifted from its soil and survive....

Religion must permeate all human functions, not to keep religion alive, but to keep human functions alive and in the service of society.

We have lost sight of the moral and ethical issues which hold a people together. Christian nations war against Christian nations. Scientists sell their services to any employer for any purpose, disregarding the moral issues involved. Every man seems to have his price, whatever his walk in life, but in the end shortsightedness works toward self destruction.

If we believe in the ultimate goodness of the Universe. If we have an insatiable desire to know the truth and if we have a will to pursue it actively, we can begin in no better institution than in our own liberal religious society.

Our religion must be big enough for our world or neither we nor our religion will survive.

When men of good will, through experiment and an ever widening range of knowledge, draw Mankind together in the spirit of neighborliness, then we are moving toward the will of an enlightened Humanity.

WHAT THE LIBERAL CHURCH IS

GRANT A. BUTLER

Des Moines Unitarian minister, 1944-1948

Few Unitarians have known their liberal religious movement as widely as Grant Butler knew it, few so well understood its complexities or sensed its opportunities. The dominant concern of his life was for the implementation of religious values through churches.

The thing that brought him to the ministry was the observation of what the application of religious values could achieve in interpersonal relations. With his parents, he had joined a fundamentalist church and had seen the squabbling factions transformed by a wise minister who told the congregation,

"You can hold all of the prayer meeting if you wish, but if your religion does not show up in the way you live it is not worth a thing."

Mr. Butler figured that if religion could achieve that kind of transformation of behavior and attitudes he was interested in becoming a minister.

He began his training in a fundamentalist Bible school but found inconsistencies both in theory and practice that bothered him. So he decided to get enough education in order to understand religion better. That took him through McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, and the Divinity School of the University of Chicago, with supplementary work at Meadville Theological School.

Need for Credibility

Mr. Butler felt that liberal religion as he found it in Unitarianism was the most credible expression of religion that he knew and that if religion is to be vital, it must be credible. Therefore he thought it was important and urgent to make the Unitarian viewpoint in religion available to all who might be interested in it. To this end he wanted to develop a strong institution, so he wrote

The liberal Church has a place of special importance in today's society, for each local congregation it has significant educational, social, inspirational and motivational values. It also has a unique role to play in the community where it is located and it has an important contribution to make to our nation and through the world.

The liberal Church is concerned with the growth of both children and adults. It helps its adherents to develop a philosophy of life in harmony with the ever-widening knowledge and is devoted to the welfare of all Mankind. It encourages the free expressions of honest thought. It welcomes differing viewpoints and new insights. It strives to nurture the basic goodness in Man. It urges each person to ponder, to weigh, to act.

The liberal Church is a center of inspiration and encouragement for individual living. It also inspires and encourages its adherents to broaden their perspectives and to take responsibility for the improvement of the community and of society as a whole. Besides the many conventional areas of service, the liberal Church can give leadership to the community in areas where best insights tell us the church should be a beacon.

Center of Information

Factors in society as they affect our common life.

religious principles

seeking a more rational and ethical orientation.

A Wider Eye

As education and knowledge become more universal
will have an ever wider to

values that are customarily associated with religion

welcomes new knowledge

to similar scrutiny and testing.

peace.

A PEEK INTO HEAVEN

By CHARLES W. POLLIPS, Des Moines ~~after his death~~ or, 1949-1950

(From a sermon "A PEEK INTO HEAVEN," delivered May 19, 1951)

Where will you spend eternity?

That is the fundamental question, the starting point for further religious pursuit among many people. Most pamphlets, eagerly thrust into one's hands by zealous, street corner missionaries, put that question foremost, in bold-faced type.

"Where Will You Spend Eternity? Now?"

Frankly, I do not know. And I have never been satisfied that anyone else did for sure. Not that I would wish to be condescending toward the endless and almost infinite variety of attempts to "look over Jordan."

On the contrary, I find them fascinating and somewhat instructive, insofar as they tell something about the Human Dream--the things men and women desire most deeply for themselves.

A Matter of Faith

I do not believe such speculation and projections should be shut off. Still, one should not confuse speculation with truth. I have no objection to anyone's believing in immortality. I could only wish that he would admit that his belief is a faith, and that further, out of the very personal needs upon which he builds his faith, he would become sensitive to the different needs which might lead another equally sincere individual to an answer different from his own.

I would suggest then, as an axiom with which to begin, that any judgment about what happens on the other side of death, is a faith and not a proof. I would also declare that any picture derives entirely from the judgments about the meaning of life here and now, and whatever we think we need to complete it. One hopes that any faith or judgment would be made with the use of reason. But reality will admit of many different answers. It does not exclude or render useless, certain types of answers.

Some of us here believe in the continued existence of life beyond the grave. Some of us do not.

How do we exist in the same religious fellowship? We are--or try to be--liberal or tolerant people who demand nothing more from one another than honesty and integrity of viewpoint, and arrive at enough humility to avoid dogmatism. There is another ground, however, which we have in common, and it is extremely important in connection with the matter of immortality. It is this, namely

We understand as a fact, that it is possible to live a good life, a rich and fruitful life, a life of courage and charity, and of such peace of mind or soul as this life ever gives--it is possible to do this even

in the full and deep conviction that this life is the only one we shall ever know.

There is one spurious and false argument for immortality which even those of us who believe in it would reject as unworthy --that only the hope of rewards and fear of punishment in another realm can undergird morality, goodness, and honor among us while we are here. Many theologians degenerate into this sort of argument, and it is our aversion here, which sets us all more sharply for many

Speculation is legitimate

Whatever else we may individually believe about immortality, this we in the liberal tradition have in common

We strip the discussion of moralism and the desire for a mechanism whereby to secure power and superiority over other humans. That is too frequently the most use for Heaven to get a favorable spot for one's self, and turn the tables on all here whom one hates or fears.

It is not irrational, in itself, to want to live forever. Unless a man hates life and has sufficient courage and conviction of its uselessness to up and end it, I find it to be no more egotistical or irrational to want to live forever than to want to live tomorrow. Further, wherever there is mystery, and death is certainly that, it is legitimate to speculate. In fact, it is the thing to do, as long as one knows what he is doing.

We cannot literally peek into Heaven, of course, so we can only guess. The dead do not return to tell us anything....

Obviously, Heaven is a concept which embodies the culmination of the heart's desires in their noblest terms. Sticking to these as they are expressed in good people, we can only say in general what it is that some of us look for. The general demands we must make upon Heaven, if we are to have one, are these:

- 1) It must be personal. That is, the personality must retain its identity.
- 2) The personality must find there is continuation and fulfillment of its earthly quest for goodness, truth, and beauty, that trinity of values which have summed up, from time immemorial, all of the values of men.
- 3) Heaven must be a more vital place than Earth, that is, in the sense of giving more to do, and granting a greater release of power with which to do it.

We are not interested in elaborating the details of Heaven. Nor do we aim here to solve the problem of evil, or the relation between spirit and body, nor the problem of time. These, too, are part of the problem of immortality, but we need only to skirt them, to see the general requirements of a Heaven.

In the first place, personality must have to retain its identity. We will not have a melting back into the Absolute or into some generalized Spirit. No matter how "eternal" I be, if I am not self-conscious

"LET'S ARGUE ABOUT RELIGION"

By HAROLD EDGAR BUCK
Ded Moines Unitarian minister, 1957-1960

(From a sermon delivered by Mr. Buck, May 3, 1959)

In the field of religion, everyone gives approval, at least, to the free mind principle. With minor exceptions, it is possible to worship as one pleases without interference from government or from private groups or individuals. We are even left free not to worship at all, if that is our choice. But we are reluctant to discuss religion.

Everyone learns, from kindergarten days onward, it just is not sensible to argue about religion or politics because it makes for hard feelings.

Inertia in religious matters does produce a state of harmony. It gives our culture a protective over-layer of a specious sort of "unity." This type of harmony, or unity, may be peaceful, but it is also enervating and self-destructive. It lacks the most essential ingredient of the very freedom in whose name it is perpetrated. It lacks creativeness.

The symbols and forms that religions have used in the past were formulated in the white heat of creativeness. They did not spring from man's mind. They are the creations of painful efforts of the human mind. They are the results of disturbing, upheaval-like activities of men and women who wrestled with the object of their religious quests. However faulty, however inaccurate they may have been, they pointed in the direction of Mankind's supreme concern.

They were part of the titanic struggle of the Human Spirit to find the source of Truth. They came out of Man's dogged search for the source of goodness.

The Tragic Problem of Religion

The concepts, as well as the symbols, were diverse. Some called it God. Some were content to call it Evolution. Some chose to suspend judgment and remained agnostic. Others refused to speculate further and denied Man's ability to confine it with the boundaries of definition.

That is the tragic problem of religion today. We are in the midst of something sociologists and theologians call the greatest religious revival in history. Yet there are many who cling to the symbols that have become empty in the light of the great and sweeping changes in our knowledge.

Where once those symbols were potent they have now lost their meaning. The world has changed. Conditions of life have changed. Man, himself has changed. His view of the physical universe has changed. But some of his religious patterns have never changed.

The tragedy is that the fragmentation and the hands-off policy have caused us to become in-grown and dogmatic in our thinking. Worse than

that it has emasculated our efforts to make our faith work because it encourages us to accept the meaningless articles and empty symbols of their faith without question. The tendency is to rely more and more upon ready-made dogma and doctrine.

Where There Is an Error

We may admit that differences between churches and sects and individuals exist. But it is less the denying and less the refusal to refuse to examine one another's presuppositions than it is to put on the cloak of superiority and assume that the answers of any one church are the final ones.

This allows freedom of belief, to be sure, but it also very plainly implies that each special group thinks that the rest of Mankind is doomed to error and lost to salvation by virtue of their very "differences."

Even liberals are not immune to that disease. We, too, feel that our way is best. The error lies in our thinking that all others are wrong because they remain stubbornly different.

We tolerant Americans refuse to argue religion. We are convinced that it is ungentlemanly and undignified to argue. There is too much concentration on freedom and not enough upon the content of the results of the exercise of that freedom.

This reluctance to argue is foolish.

Too often we assume that the only purpose of arguing is to persuade our opponents to accept our point of view.

The sad, and funny, thing about this attitude is that it leaves us almost entirely ignorant of what the other person is saying, because we are so busy thinking of what we want to say when he is finished.

A Creative Activity

Argument for its own sake can be degrading exercise. Argument for the sake of broadening one's understanding can be a creative activity.

We need to re-learn the "art of arguing." It is a skill and an art, not a bludgeon we use to beat our opponents into submission. It is a means by which religious liberals can fulfill their mission.

The art of arguing requires a deep sensitivity to the other's point of view.

The aim is not capitulation or agreement. The aim of argument is to bring forth the whole array of thought from all sides so that the examination will result in enlarged and improved conceptions leading to the truth.

AN AFFIRMATION

By JOHN D. ISOM

(Des Moines Unitarian minister, 1961-1974.)

(Mr. Isom was named minister emeritus at the time of his retirement at the end of 1974.)

(Excerpted from a sermon by Mr. Isom, April 8, 1973.)

Who are we? Religiously, we are of the Jewish and Christian heritage. Most of us were reared in families associated with a Christian or Jewish community. Through the experience of growing up we were exposed to kinds of knowledge which slowly destroyed or us the validity of many of the basic assumptions which were taught as eternal truths.

The chances are that we did not dismiss lightly the concepts of God, of Life, of Nature and of human destiny that once provided us with a meaningful world and life view, a sense of direction and purpose. Many of us, no doubt, pretended, even to ourselves, to believe in them long after doubt and disbelief had destroyed their living truth for us.

Out from the Limbo

In such a frame of mind some of us may have drifted away and lived for an indefinite time in something like a religious limbo state of mind. Others of us may have silently sat for years in our pews keeping our doubts to ourselves and tried as long as we could to believe what we no longer could believe. Then by accident, or through some experience or felt need, we were brought to this or some other Unitarian Church.

What it was that brought us to the Unitarian Church, what it caused us to remain and become involved in its activities and support are, no doubt, somewhat unique for each of us. Yet, the institution could not survive if a goodly number did not find here a fellowship of kindred souls concerning matters of some basic or significant religious beliefs.

Why No Responsive Reading

I toyed with the idea of trying to give expression to some of these beliefs in the form of a responsive reading. I dismissed the idea, however, because if I wrote it for the beliefs to be authentic they would have to be my own, and in being so they could not be altogether consistent with yours.

So, on this occasion, at least, it seemed better to me not to try to put words in your mouths, but rather, by personal testimony, try to encourage each of you to recall, and re-set in memory, the values of religious significance that you have found in the Unitarian Fellowship.

The important thing about my little testimony here is not how much or how little it tells the story, but how well and to what extent it touches significant beliefs and attitudes which are, to some degree, essential to your story, also.

The church I grew up in taught children from a very early age that the Bible was the word of God—that in it Man had been given the absolute and infallible truth to guide every one in the ways of the

will and purpose of an all-wise, knowing and powerful super-being who held every individual and the whole wide world in his hands

Sometime during 1938, a year before finishing my seminary education, the accumulated influence of my educational and living experiences made it clear to me what I had to believe to be the most convincing and compelling fact of human existence—the fact, I learned ten years later, that Schweitzer has so well expressed in this slip of a sentence:

The fact of all facts is this we are surrounded by mystery

I knew long before 1938 that I knew only in part and "saw through a glass darkly," but until then I had wanted to believe, and did after a fashion, that those who wrote the Bible must have known the truth, and that somewhere in the higher echelons of education there must be some who could make clear to me the info I did truth which had, supposedly, been revealed in the Scriptures. But what finally became clear to me, beyond disbelief, was that all humans, as I, "know only in part", and that this has been so of all humans of the past, including those who wrote all the Bibles of Mankind, and most likely will be so of all humans of the future, that they, too, will have to find their way with something less than the whole infallible truth.

Impossible To Continue

The religious significance of my 1938 experience was that henceforth what I could believe to be true, above all else, was that Man, in fact, has no infallible truth by which to judge things of ultimate value and significance, and that the best truth one does have, by which to cope with such matters, lies in what he can say and believe to be true with the greatest sincerity and honesty.

Believing this, above all else, made it impossible for me to believe as a minister in the church of my upbringing. For twelve years I tried to remain in the church by emphasizing the beliefs of the church that I did believe, and keeping as quiet as possible concerning those that I could not believe. However, it finally became clear to me that there was no way I could remain a Baptist minister without pretending to believe many things to be true that I did not and could not believe to be true, and, worse, perhaps, teach them, as true to my own children and to the children of others.

Realization

At time I realized more fully the profound significance of Huxley's contention that the most religious and sacred act of a man's life is to say and to feel, "I believe such and such to be true."

That is so because what a person can truly believe to be true above all else, is the greatest and important truth he has, for the moment at least, to guide him in making value or ethical judgments. And when anyone pretends to believe anything that is inconsistent with what he can believe above all else, he betrays that which is sacred most sacred to him--his own sense of integrity.

Frankly, I came into the Unitarian Church looking for a religious fellowship wherein I would not need to believe anything I did not and could not believe. I was looking for a place where I would be

encouraged to try to be honest with myself, encouraged to try to keep faith with my noblest sense of the true, the good and the beautiful.

One main reason I have remained in the church for 22 years is that I have always thought I had, at least, the option to keep quiet concerning those things which I could not and did not believe to be true that I did not have to pretend my own beliefs were consistent with infallible truth, revealed or discovered, nor to pretend that to be so of the beliefs of others. Such is the nature of the great negative values of religious significance that I found in the Unitarian church.

Also, I found in the Unitarian Church a positive value of great religious importance to me. I found wide and wholesome tolerance for the opinions and beliefs of others as long as they are held and expressed with a humility reflecting a genuine sincerity. And more positive, I found that the individual is actually encouraged to strive to find such ultimate meanings, that they may be essential to him by beginning with what he can sincerely be love and feel to be the noblest ideals of the true, the good and the beautiful.

THE HUMANIST ALTERNATIVE

By KENNETH G. HURCO

,Became Des Moines Unitarian minister in November 1975

(Following is the major portion of a sermon delivered
by Mr. Hurco January 4, 1976.)

Whenever we gather in our services of celebration, I like to share with you what it is that gives me hope and the courage to meet the many challenges life lays before us. So now I would like to share with you some reflections on theology.

Specifically, I want to talk about Humanist theology as a religious alternative to traditional Judeo-Christian religions. Furthermore, religious Humanism encompasses the basic points of consensus within the Unitarian Universalist movement, and it would be well to review them.

The problem for religion today is that we live in a time of transition. Rapidly changing values and shifting centers of cultural influence have nurtured an age of unbelief. Once, most Americans held to the same values or beliefs. Today, however, we see this no longer holds, the strife within our nation's churches and in society reflects how diverse and contradictory are the values and beliefs that we hold. Caught in the quandary of relativity many are skeptical--trusting no one, disbelieving everything.

Traditional religion, with its set doctrines and methods, has lost its ability to deal with the problems of living as we enter the final quarter of the Twentieth Century. For many, their religion is irrelevant, bogged down as it is in antiquated structures and theological picking of nits. This does not mean people are now irreligious. Quite the contrary. Many, the young in particular, are searching for a religious theology to aid them in living fuller, more meaningful lives. Sadly, so much of contemporary religious revivals is little more than putting old wine in new skins. The language is new and right on, covered in blue denim, but it is only a gloss over a vapid, substanceless and obsolete foundation.

Is There an Answer? Something Began in Des Moines

The question is, What shall we worship? What shall we believe? Is there a religious perspective with a solid foundation that is capable of meeting this nation's and the world's needs as we enter a third century of our existence? Is there a faith that is salutary to our times, affirms life, and enables us to live with genuine righteousness and flexible truth?

I believe there is. It is known best as religious Humanism or liberal religion, and it is the core of contemporary Unitarianism and Universalism.

Religious Humanism was born in this church in Des Moines early in this century. Curtis Reese, tenth minister of this society from 1905 to 1919, in tandem with John Dietrich of the First Unitarian Church in Minneapolis, formulated the basic notions of religious Humanism. At that time, the First World War was in progress, an event that shattered the faith that many had in God's Providence. The Unitarians, the ever hopeful optimists of the day, had to re-evaluate their theology. Mr. Reese and Mr. Dietrich led the way to developing a new theology that was both constant with modern scientific inquiry and free of what they saw as the impediments of traditional religion.

Basic Tenets of Humanism

Religious humanistic basic tenets were first published in the Humanist Manifesto of 1933. They are

The Universe is self-existing, not created, human beings are part of Nature, an organic whole, body and soul are one

"Man's religion is shaped by his culture;

"The Universe shows no evidence of any supernatural or cosmic guarantees of human values;

"The aim of religion is to foster the creative in Man and to encourage achievements that add to the satisfaction of life,

"Religion consists of those emotions, purposes and experiences which are humanly significant. 'Nothing Human is alien to the religious. It includes labor,

art, science, philosophy, love, friendship, recreation,
all that is in its degree expressive of intelligently
satisfying Human living

"Religious Humanism considers the complete realization
of Human personality to be the aim of Man's life and
seeks its development and fulfillment in the here and
now. This is the explanation of the Humanist's social
passion."

The Humanist Manifesto concludes

"We assert that Humanism will

- (a) affirm life rather than deny it,
- (b) seek to elicit the possibilities of life,
not flee from it, and
- (c) endeavor to establish the conditions of
satisfactory life for all, not merely for a few."...

Spiritual Freedom is Keystone

Unitarian Universalists hold to the idea that spiritual truths are
discovered continually, that the Universe is in progress, constantly
undergoing change. Put simply, Human knowledge about life and its meaning
is growing. We discover new truths. Thus, we do not hold any one book
sacred, for Unitarian Universalists there are many sources of the sacred
and divine, there are many paths to wholeness....

What Holds Us Together?

The question is often asked: If Unitarian Universalists do not
believe in the same things, what holds your church together?

What holds us together is our respect for each person's integrity
and right to develop her/his own beliefs....

The most significant aspect of our method, to my mind, is that what
we say and do on Sunday morning carries over and has impact on what we
do the rest of the week. The same values of spiritual freedom, affirma-
tion of personal integrity, and a commitment to the use of reason in all
matters should apply at every moment.

Those who assume a belief in God is necessary for the religious life
criticize Unitarian Universalism for furthering a relativism that leads
to moral nihilism. I do not believe this is true. The evidence is such
that the Universe has no purpose, there is no God's will for Humanity, and
saying there is does not meet the danger of nihilism. Even so very much
with us after twenty centuries of belief in divine providence. It seems
to me that the only hope Humanity has is for humans to work harder at
fulfilling the potential for good by taking full responsibility for our
actions.

Those who come to this church do so for many reasons. But I believe
they stay for pretty much the same reason.

This church, as I see it, offers a religious theology that is truly
an alternative, that is life affirming, that recognizes each person's
unique worth, respects that integrity by providing a non-doctrinaire,
non-dogmatic, non-authoritarian environment of spiritual freedom and
intellectual inquiry into the questions that bother us all.

TWO SETS OF TWENTIETH CENTURY "TEN COMMANDMENTS"

Two Des Moines Unitarian ministers have proposed two sets of "Ten Commandments", written on paper instead of being carved on stone.

In her 1908 Thanksgiving sermon, Mary A. Safford suggested we shall do well to heed these Ten Commandments in Politics.

1 -Love thy country which has redeemed thee from tyranny and bondage.

2 Thou shalt not worship any political idols, nor bow down to them nor serve them, for the iniquities will be visited upon thee and upon thy children unto the third and fourth generations.

3 Thou shalt not take the name of Patriotism in vain nor use it to hide thy selfish purposes.

4 Remember the Day of Election to keep it holy.

5 -Honor the sanctity of the ballot that the days of the Republic may be prolonged.

6 Thou shalt not kill the spirit of Freedom by neglecting to exercise the prerogatives of a free man.

7 Thou shalt not adulterate the purity of civic life by entering politics for gain.

8 Thou shalt not encourage public servants to steal by thy indifference.

9 Thou shalt not let greed for gain bear false witness against thy patriotism.

10 -Thou shalt not seek a public office which thou are not fit to fill.

(When Miss Safford proclaimed these Ten Commandments, women in the United States did not have the right of suffrage.)

Twenty-nine years later, on December 5, 1932, F. Burdette Backus proclaimed

1.-Thou shalt be healthy.

2 -Thou shalt work hard, be industrious.

3. Thou shalt laugh and play.

4 Thou shalt be intelligent.

5 Thou shalt seek beauty.

6 -Thou shalt make a happy home.

7 -Thou shalt be a good citizen thou shalt vote.

8 Thou shalt cultivate an international mind.

9 Thou shalt accept the Universe.

10.-Thou shalt be a rebel.

"GOD DEFINED AS THE TERM FOR NATURAL PROCESSES"

As part of their "Church Across the Street" studies, members of the church school's junior high class sought some definitions and opinions from the Des Moines Unitarian congregation on May 18, 1969

Fifty-seven persons out of more than one hundred who attended the service defined "God" as a term for natural processes, such as love, evolution, etc

Not all persons in the congregation answered the questionnaire, but 103 replies were received. Some questions were not answered, and in a few cases more than one answer was given to a question. That is why the totals do not always add up to 103

The questions and tabulated answers follow:

1 --Which of the following comes closest to expressing your belief about God?

- a). --A supernatural being who reveals himself in human experiences and history 4
- b). --The ground of all being, real but not adequately describable 19
- c). --Term for natural processes, such as love, creative evolution, etc. 57
- d). An irrelevant concept 17
- e). A concept harmful to worthwhile religion 3

2 Which best describes the function that prayer holds for you?

- a). Communion with God 3
- b). Petition (asking for yourself) 3
- c). - Intercession (for others) 11
- d). --Meditation 22
- e). --Communion with inner self 21
- f). Other 1
- g). --Term not found useful 47

3 Do you consider yourself a Christian by your own definition?

Yes . . . 47 No....45 Don't know.... 1

4 --Do you believe in the divinity of Jesus?
(Divinity of Christ)

Yes....15 No....75 Don't know.... 3

5 --Do you believe in conscious life after death for yourself?

Yes....16 No....73 Don't know.... 3

6 --were you born or reared in the Unitarian Church?

Yes ...9

No 94

7 --If your answer to No. 6 is "No", what is your religious background?

| | | | |
|---------------------|----|-------------------|---|
| Methodist | 25 | Catholic | 5 |
| Presbyterian | 21 | Episcopal | 1 |
| Protestant | 4 | Reformed | 2 |
| Lutheran | 5 | Christian Science | 2 |
| Baptist | 3 | Mennonite | 1 |
| Southern Baptist | 2 | Unitarian | 2 |
| Congregational | 9 | Union | 2 |
| Disciples of Christ | 5 | None | 4 |

8 --Why do you attend church services?

| | |
|---|----|
| Intellectual stimulation | 59 |
| Fellowship | 55 |
| Celebrating common values | 26 |
| Personal reflection | 35 |
| Group experience of participation and worship | 29 |
| Music--aesthetic satisfaction | 22 |
| Motivation to serve others | 23 |
| To find answers | 1 |
| Sense of duty | 1 |
| Spiritual inspiration | 1 |
| Other | 15 |
| Do not attend very often | 2 |

Many respondents made more than one choice.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

By Prof. Desmond Bragg

(Dr. Bragg of Drake University is a member
of the Des Moines Unitarian Church)

The Unitarian Universalist movement or church has been traditionally the avant garde in religious thinking and acting in this country. It is not always a pleasant position to occupy, but it does seem to fit the needs of our particular group of people.

U. U.'s represent basically an intellectually honest approach to life which does not take the tried and worn paths simply because they are popularly trod, but because they do not lead where the member thinks he/she should be going. Whatever the future may hold, it seems quite realistic to assume that U. U.'s will continue to be free and honest thinkers and seekers after truth. Liberalism is the word descriptive of our faith, meaning freedom of thought and action.

Another thread which has run through U. U. history is the tendency to espouse unpopular causes which seek to redress social, political or economic wrongs. This is a natural outgrowth or consequence of the search for truth and willingness to ask unpopular and often difficult and unpleasant questions. If we are to remain true to this thread of our heritage we will certainly want to continue to seek justice and mercy, as well as right the wrongs in our society.

Something for Each and All to Do

Translated into specific programs to meet the personal and individual as well as broader societal needs means that our church must constantly seek ways to sponsor and promote programs and activities which encourage open and free discussion on any and all subjects of concern to our members.

We must always seek ways to stimulate and develop good thinking in all our people from the youngest to the oldest, making it practical and pleasurable for each to become involved in, and contributing to that intellectual ferment productive of good, new ideas and growth in as many areas of our lives as possible.

These goals will not automatically be accomplished through the simple stating, but rather require many hours of planning, thought and careful implementation in order that we continue to be a viable institution, worthy of a place in the community.

Learn from the Business World

We may well take a page from the business world where goals are accomplished through what has been called 'Management by Objectives', characterized by flow charts, PERT, and other management oriented techniques. In order to accomplish our goals we must seek out either in our membership or bring into our ranks young, intelligent and well

trained individuals, both lay and clerical, who will serve as effective leaders for our society as we grapple with the issues and questions of the day.

If we are to attract and hold potential leaders and opinion-makers in our community, we must continually seek out and explore those issues, questions and problems that represent the growing edge of thought and action in our world and raise a banner which the wise and noble of the Human Race may espouse. As our life and times change we must we as a society change, constantly sifting and winnowing through the conflicting forces and ideas which would alter our course, enabling us to meet the personal and social needs in the days and years ahead.

A constantly expanding humanistic view of our world and its peoples indicates the need for a proportionate reassessment of our function as a social institution.

War and peace, world hunger and economic needs among half the world's population place upon the consciences of all of us a series of tasks almost defying understanding and solution. Is the human species capable of living in peace, co-operation, with mutual assistance and brotherhood in this small global village we call the Earth? The question has not yet been answered, but can not remain so in this age of hydrogen and nuclear proliferation.

Need for a Basic Consensus

Basic injustices and inequalities to great masses of fellow human beings are a constant embarrassment and concern to all thinking citizens, especially those who espouse a humanitarian or humanist philosophy. Half-hearted and casual efforts will not avail. Again we need qualified leadership in uniting our fragmented desires and goals into paths of common action worthy of support.

One of the problems of U. S. 'n is our diversity and tendency toward extreme individualism, a condition that may not be either good or bad, depending on whether we can honestly challenge one another to think clearly, yet build a nucleus around which a basic consensus can be built.

We must further seek to build into the fabric of the church, programs which replace the extended family by supporting the nuclear family so common in our world. Art, music, drama and the dance are aesthetic ingredients adding dimensions to our life and culture making our common journey a shared, pleasurable experience and tend to make us more humane and civilized.

Intellectual growth, love for fellow man, hard work in seeking solutions to our problems, and programs to bind us together in actions for a humane community are the goals we should be traveling toward in the coming Century. May we have the insight and courage to do so.

MEMORIALS

Many memorial gifts and voluntary contributions have come to the First Unitarian Church of Des Moines, Iowa. All tend to strengthen its existence, help its past to remain alive in the memories of its members and to strengthen its philosophies and programs.

A lot for the First Church building at Fifteenth and Linden street was made possible by the gift of another plot of ground given by Mrs. George J. (Mary) Wright. Announcement of the gift was made on March 6, 1881. Her husband, Senator Wright, had served as a justice on the Iowa Supreme Court and was a United States senator from Iowa 1871-1877.

Two plaques in the present meeting house entrance keep alive the spirit of pioneer religious liberals and to the devotion of those ideals by Mr. and Mrs. Sylvan Stanley Hunting, to whom this volume is dedicated.

Those plaques were the gift of Nathaniel S., son of Mr. and Mrs. Hunting.

Des Moines Unitarian services have been made warmer for years by music from the pipe organ which was the gift of Mary A. Sanford. She is remembered in a plaque in the room which bears her name, a presentation by Unity Circle in 1928.

Three Other Plaques

Also, there are three bronze plaques on the south wall of the auditorium that add meaning to the lives of the persons for whom they were dedicated.

One is to the memory of R. D. and Anna M. Emery, "self converted unitarians, they were deeply devoted to the cause of liberal religion." The plaque was placed by their son, Anna B. Emery, who gave the name to the society in their names. Anna Emery was a long-time member of the Iowa Capitol Planning Commission.

The second plaque acknowledges landscaping provided by Harris M. Golden and Dorothy Golden Beard to their parents John Roger and Myrtle Golden. "The good of the church was their objective during all the years of their devoted service."

The third plaque honors Frank and Nellie Brown, for 60 years an altering advocates of the workers for Unitarianism. We remember them as kindred souls of Abou Ben Adhem and record here that they, too, were ones "who loved their Fellow Men".

Principles of Unitarianism

Henry B. Griffiths, born in 1869, died January 30, 1950, was a faithful and ardent Unitarian from the time he became a member in the late 1890s until his death. He sponsored the church school for years, often acted as the society's treasurer, and served as legal counsel, as did Franklin Brown.

Following Mr. Griffiths' death, a memorial in the form of a five pronged candelabrum was dedicated on March 20, 1950. The five candles are reminders of five cardinal principles of Unitarianism which had been suggested two or three decades earlier. They were

- 1.--Individual freedom of belief.
- 2.--Discipleship to advancing truth.
- 3.--Democratic processes in human relations.
- 4.--Universal brotherhood, undivided by nation, race or creed.
- 5.--Allegiance to the cause of a united world community.

Books of Memory

Signatures of men and women who become members of the Des Moines Unitarian Society, together with a record of marriages, births and deaths, and a record of memorial gifts, today are preserved in three elegant books, each bound in hand-tooled leather.

For years when anyone joined the society, he or she signed a rather old and deteriorating membership book. This was replaced October 17, 1956, when Mildred E. and Don H. Allen presented a special volume for memberships as a memorial to Mrs. Allen's brother, Raymond Kresensky 1897-1955, and who had been a member of the society.

And in 1970 two volumes of a similar elegance and quality were given to the society as memorials to Grant A. Butler, Des Moines minister, 1944-1948. Mr. Butler died June 5, 1967. The books were the gifts of his widow, now Mrs. Ralph W. Burhoe, and Mr. Burhoe.

One volume is for recording marriages, births and deaths in the church community; the second is for a record of memorials, other gifts and bequests to the society.

Joseph Priestley on Christianity

The Des Moines Unitarian Society is the solicitous and watchful guardian of four volumes of a detailed criticism of orthodox Christian theology, written by Dr. Joseph Priestley, and published in England in 1786. Dr. Priestley was the eminent scientist who discovered oxygen in 1774. Because of his religious opinions, which were so opposite to those of the Established Church of England, he fled from his native country and came to the United States where he founded Unitarian Church societies in Northumberland and Philadelphia in Pennsylvania.

The four volumes are entitled "An History of Early Opinions Concerning Jesus Christ, Compiled From Original Writers, Proving that the Christian Church Was at First Unitarian."

The Des Moines church received the volumes from an anonymous donor in 1956. Shortly thereafter they were placed in the lobby of the meeting house and displayed in an elegant and sturdy showcase, made for that purpose by William Landau, a member of the society, whose avocation for years was fine cabinet making. A special and equally elegant cabinet-stand for the Kresensky Membership book likewise was made by Mr. Landau. It also is the repository for the Grant Butler Memorial books.

Only two articles from the beginnings of Des Moines Unitarianism in 1877 have withstood the effects of time and remain as reminders to today's members of those early days. One is the attractive lectern first used in the Linden street building. The other is a settee from the home of Mr. and Mrs. Hunting.

What's That Log?

Persons who visit the meeting house for the first time often are curious about a highly polished cedar log. It was a gift in 1908 or 1909 from Mrs. Wiley Moore, a member, born August 28, 1837; died October 30, 1911.

Wayside Pulpit

In December of 1968 a Wayside Pulpit was placed on the church property, near the corner of Bell avenue and Casady drive. It was dedicated to the memory of Dan Williams, director of Des Moines public libraries and a hard-working Unitarian from the day he and Mrs. Williams came to Des Moines. Messages about Unitarianism, in very large type, are displayed in the case so that all who pass by may pause and read.

There are many more memorials of a visual nature.

When more lighting in the Mary Safford room was desired, it was installed by Lea Mould.

The sidewalk from the east entrance of the building to the Druid parking lot was dark. A light to brighten that walk after dark was placed in the summer of 1975 as a memorial to Mr. and Mrs. Louis Bertin, as a recognition of their long years of service to the society.

The society received title to a house and lot at 1303 Ninth street in December of 1964 as a bequest in the will of Miss Merle Ingham, who had died a short time before that.

A large oil painting by Karl Mattern, "When the Cows Come Home", was given to the society by Louise Noun in September of 1966. Mr. Mattern was professor of art at Drake University for 14 years.

There have been many monetary gifts and bequests, ranging from \$100 to more than \$11,000, received over the years. All those contributions of which a record has been found are entered in the Book for Memorials.

A Fourth Plaque

A fourth bronze plaque is scheduled to be placed on the auditorium wall sometime late this year (1977). It will memorialize Benjamin F. Gue, an ardent Unitarian who was the first charter member of this society and who served many years as a trustee and on more than one occasion was president of the society. One biography of him states that he was the first secretary-treasurer of the Iowa Unitarian Association. He was born December 25, 1828, in Greene county, New York. He died June 1, 1904, in Des Moines.

Mr. Gue was Iowa lieutenant governor in 1866-1868 and once served Scott county in the General Assembly. In addition to his public and Unitarian activities, he was publisher of the Fort Dodge Messenger at one time and also editor of the Iowa Homestead. One great contribution by him was a four-volume history of Iowa.

AFFILIATED ORGANIZATIONS

The oldest of affiliated groups associated with the Des Moines Unitarian Society is Unity Circle, a women's unit. Although women had been active from the beginning of the society, it was not until January of 1879 that they met and formed the Ladies' Aid Society, with Mrs. J. R. Effinger as first president. Mr. Effinger was the organizing minister of the congregation. A few years later the women changed the name of their group to Unity Circle, a group and a name that continue to exist.

Although the motivating idea was cultural and educational, the women did not ignore raising and giving financial aid to the church society even to this day. One example of financial aid was their operation of a dining hall at the Iowa State Fair at Forty-second street and Grand avenue in 1879.

Because Unity Circle meetings have been held in afternoon hours since the beginning, teachers and other working women found it difficult to attend those sessions; so Evening Alliance under the leadership of Mrs. Grant Butler was organized in 1948 with Mrs. Archie (Ida) Johnson as the first president. Mrs. Johnson continues to exert an active role in many of the society's activities.

Objectives of both groups are similar and, jointly and individually, they have contributed in financial and other ways toward support of the church society.

Men in the church were also active at one time as a group, but in recent years their activities have been directed in other ways than an organization of their own.

A Sunday School, or a Church School, as it is now called, has been conducted with various degrees of success since 1877. It continues actively in attempts to teach young folks a rational and liberal religious philosophy.

Experimental dramatics has been the aim for years of a group of men and women known as the Drama Workshop. Its inception was during the ministry of Charles W. Phillips. Although not actually a part of the church society's structure, it has been able to use the church building for its programs.

Much more could be said about all these groups. Mrs. E. A. (Ethel) Franquemont wrote a detailed story of Unity Circle in 1964. Perhaps one day someone may be moved to record the stories of the other groups. But the account in this volume has been a chronicle intended to tell the story of the Des Moines Unitarian Church itself. Shortcomings are obvious. The author hopes they are not serious.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Although these acknowledgments are dated 5 August, 1977, they actually carry over two days to Sunday, 7 August, when the one-hundredth anniversary of the founding of the First Unitarian Church of Des Moines, Iowa, was formally recognized.

This has been an attempt to preserve some of the information of the society. The record is not complete; it cannot be complete; no such an institution can ever complete its program and mission. If there be inadequacies, absence of important information, or errors as to fact, all are unintentional and must be attributed to the inability of the compiler to do a better job.

The great part of the material was gleaned from a hundred-year accumulation of records, boards' of trustees minutes, newspaper clippings, printed documents and texts or parts of sermons and lectures of many of the ministers which have been found in the society's archives.

Help and much verification was obtained from a survey prepared in 1944 by Lon Ray Call, then minister-at-large for the American Unitarian Association; the November 1949 issue of the Palimpsest of the State Historical Society of Iowa; and from a thesis written in September 1968, prepared by Sally S. Cotten for a class in history at Drake University.

Special thanks go to Dr. Desmond Bragg of Drake University for his contribution of an essay, "Where Do We Go From Here?"; to Charles Ransom and John Wannemaker for valuable suggestions to improve the manuscript; to Mrs. Shirley Bertin for typing the manuscript for reproduction and James Bertin for reading proof on the same; and to Jacqueline and Don Ball for help in the production of the volume.

There is special appreciation for having had the opportunity to read Dr. Loren Eiseley's book, "The Unexpected Universe", and to be able to use, with credit, one sentence from that book: "WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE OF THE PAST THE WAY INTO THE THICKETS OF THE FUTURE IS DESPERATE AND UN-CLEAR."

Also gratitude is expressed for all the other help which has been obtained from all obtainable sources. And the effort has been made easier by the constant encouragement of my wife, Ida. The work has been rewarding to the writer. It is hoped readers can find information and inspiration from this effort.

Oval Quist,
Member of the society since 1937,
5 August, 1977